

THE DISCOVERIES

AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

Ras Shamra-funnene og det Gamle Testament.

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PREFACE

THESE LECTURES on the Ras Shamra texts and the Old Testament were originally given at the University of Oslo. Facts from the excavations at Ras Shamra in the latter half of the 1950's have been added. They give more details about the history of ancient Ugarit; but they make no change in the essentials of the author's position, which is also set forth in his book, *Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts*. The texts are referred to in accordance with the system used in Cyrus H. Gordon's *Ugaritic Manual*, *Ugaritic Handbook*, and *Ugaritic Literature*.

I owe a great debt of thanks to the publisher for his interest in the book, and to Professor G. W. Anderson, whose English translation is better than the original text. Any errors which may be found are surely mine, not his.

Arvid S. Kapelrud

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THE *Ras Shamra* DISCOVERIES

AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

I.

THE DISCOVERIES

MANY IMPORTANT DISCOVERIES about the past have been made after careful inquiry and preparation, but probably just as many have come about quite fortuitously. The latter is true of the Ras Shamra discoveries.

It was a Syrian peasant, plowing his land near the Mediterranean coast on a day in March, 1928, who made the first discovery. His plow struck a stone, which on closer inspection turned out to be part of the remains of a grave bearing the marks of Mycenaean culture. Some vases and other small articles were also brought to light.

When this was reported to the French Archaeological Institute in Beirut, Service des Antiquités en Syrie et au Liban, the Director, Charles Viroilleaud, sent one of his trusted men, L. Albanèse, to inspect the site of the discoveries. Albanèse immediately identified it as an ancient cemetery; but it did not seem to be particularly promising. However, the interest of the experienced archaeologist was aroused by a mound in the immediate neighborhood. It seemed probable from its appearance that the ruins of an ancient city might be found there. It was a "tell," i.e., a mound produced by the erection of new cities on the ruins of older ones in the course of millenniums. The Syrian peasants called the mound Ras Shamra, "Fennel Mound," because of the flowers which grew there.

The site of the discovery lies on the coast of northern Syria, due east of the eastern tip of Cyprus, some thirty miles south of

the mouth of the Orontes, and about seven miles north of Latakia, which in ancient times was called *Laodicea ad mare*. Here there is a small harbor, *Minet al-Beida*, the ancient *Leukos Limen*, "the white harbor." The cemetery, where the excavations were first begun, lies close to the sea. *Ras Shamra*, the mound with the ruined cities, is a little farther inland, between two brooks. On the northern horizon situated on the estuary of the river Orontes, can be seen the peak of *Jebel Aqra*, some 5,800 feet high. There are reasons for believing that this was the mountain which the ancient inhabitants of this region regarded as "the mountain of the gods in the north," *Sapan*, where the royal throne of the gods was situated.

The excavations were undertaken by the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres de Paris*. Work was started on April 2, 1929, under the direction of the archaeologist, *Claude F. A. Schaeffer*. He began with the cemetery at *Minet al-Beida*; but before the work there had been completed he moved to *Ras Shamra*. *Albanès* had already drawn attention to this site; and the well-known orientalist, *René Dussaud*, had suggested that the ruins of the city to which the cemetery belonged were probably to be found there. On May 8, 1929, work began on the new site. Five days later it became evident that the expedition had been unbelievably fortunate in its choice. On May 14 the first clay tablets were found, twenty in all, in a corner of a room which had clearly been destroyed by a violent conflagration. The tablets bore inscriptions in a hitherto unknown cuneiform script. This made it clear that *Ras Shamra* must be regarded as an unusually promising site for excavation. In the following years excavations were carried on with the utmost energy. During the entire period, *Schaeffer* was in charge of operations, which gave a valuable element of continuity to the enterprise. Work continued until 1939, when it was temporarily suspended because of the war.

The assumption of *Dussaud* and *Schaeffer*, that the mound con-

tained the ruins of ancient cities, turned out to be justified. In the ancient Near East, cities were often sacked by enemies and reduced to ruins. When they were rebuilt, the surface of the ruins was only roughly leveled, and the new cities were erected above the old. When this process had been repeated several times, the latest city was at a considerably higher level than the first. At Ras Shamra the same thing happened. The mound was entirely artificial, the strata being about eighteen meters thick. This great thickness indicates that the foundation of the city goes back to very ancient times.

The archaeologists estimate that there are five main strata at Ras Shamra; and they have tried to establish a chronology of the strata, based mainly on the pottery which has been found, but supported also by other discoveries. Some revision of details may yet be necessary, but the main outline of the dating is certainly correct.

Dussaud and Schaeffer date the strata thus: the topmost stratum (which will chiefly interest us in this book), I, *c.* 1500-1100 B.C.; stratum II, *c.* 2100-1500 B.C.; stratum III, *c.* 3500-2100 B.C.; stratum IV, *c.* 4000-3500 B.C.; and finally, the lowest of all, stratum V, the Neolithic Age.

The identification of the city whose ruins are concealed in this mound presented no great difficulty. There can be no doubt that this is the site of the ancient city known in the second millennium B.C. as Ugarit. The name occurs several times in the texts which have been discovered, and is also known from the Tell el-Amarna letters, the ancient diplomatic correspondence discovered in Egypt. Ugarit is also mentioned several times in the archives of Zimri-lim from Mari on the Euphrates, and is referred to in Hittite texts from Boghaz-Köi in Asia Minor.

The text in I AB (Gordon, no. 62) has a colophon which is well preserved. It mentions Niqmad (nqmd), king of Ugarit (VI:53-57). In 1934 a letter was found, written in Accadian and

addressed to El-shar (El-Melek) at Ugarit. The writer expresses the following wish: "May the gods of Ugarit preserve thee, my brother!" (Belu-bur's letter, 2-4). It can therefore be established with certainty that the excavated city is Ugarit, concerning the site of which nothing definite was previously known.

The site was inhabited from the Neolithic Age onwards. Some pottery from stratum V can be assigned to the Neolithic Age. It seems to indicate connections with other parts of Syria and with the regions around the upper Euphrates. Finds from stratum IV point to this still more clearly for the later period. Beautifully decorated pots and jars have been found of the el-Obeid type, so called from the site where the most characteristic examples have been discovered. In the first half of the fourth millennium B.C., this type of pottery was in use over an extensive area. It was to be found from Ras Shamra-Ugarit in the west to the heart of Turkestan in the east, and thus gives a clear picture of active cultural connections in western Asia at that early period.

Pottery with el-Obeid characteristics disappears gradually in stratum III, and new elements appear. There are examples of red and black pottery, with simple patterns, of the type known as Canaanite pottery. It is probable that a Semitic people, either Amorites or Canaanites, came to Ugarit during the third millennium B.C. During this millennium, too, the Egyptians made steady advances in western Asia. They had a base at Byblus, south of Ugarit. There they presumably had a colony with its own Egyptian temple. Their cultural influence was appreciable. Gifts from Pharaohs which had been specially sent to the temple, have been found at Ras Shamra.

The kings of the north and east, too, were interested in the important commercial port of Ugarit during the second millennium. In the troubled centuries around the middle of the second millennium, there was a constant tug-of-war between several powers which contended for leadership: Hittites, Hurrians, Mitannians,

Assyrians. Inscriptions and individual texts indicate that the city was subject to strong Hittite and Hurrian influence.¹

In spite of the conflicts, the middle of the second millennium was a period of real prosperity for Ugarit. Many traces of this are to be found in stratum I, the stratum in which the texts were found. The greatness of the period is reflected particularly in the houses, which were large and comfortable, with many rooms, water laid on, bathrooms, etc. Craftsmanship was at a high level, and there was a brisk and extensive trade in cosmetics and other goods. The art of writing was highly valued; and in a double sense it is to this that we are indebted for the existence of texts from ancient Ugarit. Up on the mound there was found a building, connected with the temple of Baal, which, to judge from what was found in it, can only be described as a library. It was there that the important discoveries of texts were made. It was a place where priests and temple scholars resorted, where cultic documents were kept, and where they were copied by scribes. Probably the work of copying played a part in the training of new scribes, so that the place served at the same time as a school for scribes.

King Niqmad was a notable patron of scholarship and the art of writing. The end of his reign brings us down to the Amarna period, the middle of the fourteenth century B.C. From two discoveries of documents made in the most recent excavations at Ras Shamra, it is evident that he stood in some kind of subordinate relationship to the Hittite king, Suppiluliuma (1375-1335 B.C.), who was his contemporary.

This King Niqmad was not the only one of that name at Ugarit. Recent discoveries show that at least three kings bore the name. The first of them must have reigned at a very early period. A

¹ Claude F. A. Schaeffer is of the opinion that Ugarit was never occupied by the Hittites. The city-state tried to be faithful to the Egyptians, but had a fairly free and independent position, which it no doubt wanted to maintain. Cf. Schaeffer's "Les fouilles de Ras Shamra-Ugarit: 15ième, 16ième et 17ième campagnes (1951, 1952 et 1953), rapport sommaire," *Syria*, Vol. XXXI (1954), 14-67.

cylinder seal has been discovered which was the official seal of the Ugaritic kings and was used by the entire dynasty. It bears the inscription, "Yaqarum, Son of Niqmad, King of Ugarit." The pictorial representation on it is of homage to a deified king.² The theme is of a kind which is often found during the third dynasty of Ur, but which persisted until later periods. The seal is very clear; and the script shows features which point to an early period. The French scholar, Jean Nougayrol, holds that it belongs to the Isin-Larsa epoch and therefore is from the nineteenth or eighteenth century B.C.³ This seems to indicate that the founders of the kingdom of Ugarit, King Niqmad and King Yaqarum, belonged to the wave of Amorites who assumed power in Mesopotamia and the neighboring lands at the beginning of the second millennium B.C.

On the left, the seal shows the interceding goddess wearing a tiara. In front of her is a person without a beard facing the bearded king who is sitting on a cushioned stool placed on a dais. The king wears a headdress like that worn by Gudea or Hammurabi. Mrs. E. Douglas Van Buren says of this scene: "Homage was paid to the deified king, but not worship, for that was reserved for the deity, whose temporary embodiment the king might be, and who was the real protagonist in the sacred mystery."⁴

Investigations have revealed that about the end of the reign of Pharaoh Amenhotep IV (c. 1358 B.C.), a catastrophe befell Ugarit in which the greater part of the city was destroyed. Presumably it was an unusually violent earthquake. But this did not mean the end of Ugarit; for it arose again on the ruins. But the city never again became what it had been; and at the end of the thirteenth century or the beginning of the fourteenth the final catastrophe

² Cf. E. Douglas Van Buren, "Homage to a Deified King," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, Vol. I (1952), 92-120.

³ See pages XL-XLII in *Le palais royal d'Ugarit*, III (Paris, 1955), Mission de Ras Shamra, Vol. VI.

⁴ Van Buren, "Homage to a Deified King," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, Vol. I (1952), 120.

took place. Savage warriors, known as "the peoples of the sea," who probably came from the islands of the Mediterranean, or from Asia Minor, swept along the coast, leaving the land scorched behind them. Ugarit was conquered, plundered, and devastated, and its inhabitants slaughtered. In the Biblical phrase, there was not one stone left upon another. That was the last chapter in the story of the city.

We have referred above to the library as one of the most considerable buildings excavated at Ras Shamra. The temples, of which the city had several, were even larger and more impressive. Three of them have been excavated; of these, two must have been among the most important, as is indicated both by their dimensions and their situation on the top of the hill. They are alike in ground plan and in size; solid, rectangular buildings, each of which probably had a tower. One, which was dedicated to the god Dagan, has a somewhat more enclosed appearance than the other, which was dedicated to Baal. Both temples have a large, inmost room, "the Holy of Holies," where the images of the gods were set up. Outside it there was another room, "the holy place," which, in the temple of Baal, was open towards the forecourt, where the remains of an altar were found. When the cultic acts were carried out, it was there in the forecourt that the people assembled and the sacrifices were offered. Thus the plan of the temple of Baal was very similar to the one adopted for the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem several centuries later.

In the temple of Baal, the "Holy of Holies" was separated from the outer wall on one side; and in the narrow passage between the outer wall and the wall of the "Holy of Holies" there were discovered the remains of a stairway which led up to the tower. Up on the open terrace on the tower, sacrifice was made to Baal, as described in the Keret text.

It is noteworthy that the two temples which have the best and most commanding situation are dedicated to Dagan and Baal, two

gods who may have come from abroad into the pantheon of Ugarit. It will be of the utmost interest if, in future excavations at Ras Shamra, other large temples are discovered, dedicated perhaps to El, the ancient supreme god of Ugarit.

The house where the library was found belonged to the high priest. It was a large building with many rooms. Under the pavement in one of the rooms were found a collection of weapons and another of tools, seventy-four bronze articles, including swords, axes, adzes, and the like. The knives had beautifully decorated handles. All the articles were unused; and the inscriptions on some of the adzes showed that they had been presented to the high priest by a bronze-worker.

In addition to the weapons and the pottery already mentioned many other objects were discovered: idols, lamps, golden bowls and dishes with embossed hunting scenes, beautifully carved weights, implements of every kind, and ornaments such as earrings and tiaras. In artistic style they reveal the influence of Assyria, Egypt, and Minoan Crete. At that period Ugarit enjoyed a high level of culture and effective communication with the great centers of civilization. Further evidence of this is provided by the impressive palace foundations on which Schaeffer has concentrated excavation in recent years.⁵ From east to west the palace measures 120 meters and from north to south about 85 meters. It covered an area of some 10,000 square meters. Alongside the palace from east to west there ran a main street which has also been excavated in part. The excavation of the palace, as yet incomplete, has brought to light new muniment rooms. Here lie the central, southern, eastern, and western muniment rooms, so termed from the wings of the building in which they were found. The discoveries here have been mostly letters and legal and financial documents; and accordingly

⁵ Schaeffer, "Les fouilles de Ras Shamra-Ugarit," *Syria*, Vol. XXXI (1954), 14-67.

these new muniment rooms have supplied scholars with the historical material which the library did not provide.

During seven seasons between 1938 and 1952, there were excavated over 250 tablets bearing cuneiform inscriptions in Accadian. One hundred and eighty of these were found in the central muniment room. There are also some tablets in Ugaritic or Hurrian, but the great majority are in Accadian. From the letters it is possible to get some impression of the kings and their contemporaries, rulers whose dates can be established with a high degree of probability.

We hear of King Ammistamru I, a contemporary of Amenophis IV (Achnaton), 1372-1354 B.C. The above-mentioned king, Niqmad II, was a contemporary of the same Pharaoh. King Niqmepa was a contemporary of Mursilis II (1334-1306 B.C.) and of Hattusilis III (1275-1250 B.C.). King Ammistamru II was a contemporary of the last-named king and of Tudhalias IV (1250-1220 B.C.). We hear also of King Niqmad III, of Ibiranu, and of Hammurapi, a namesake of the great king of Babylon.

The many documents which indicate close relationship with the Hittites were found for the most part in the southern muniment house. Other discoveries show that connections with Egypt were intimate and of long duration. An alabaster vase has been discovered bearing the seal of Rameses II. It thus belongs to the period 1290-1224 B.C., and shows that even at that late period the Egyptians exercised influence in Ugarit, or, at all events, wanted to do so.

Some fine ivory pieces have been found in the royal palace. One of them, the foot panel of the king's bedstead, has been described by Schaeffer as the largest single piece of ivory carving hitherto found in the Near East, being more than a meter wide and about fifty centimeters high.⁶ It is divided into sixteen panels, beautifully

⁶ *Illustrated London News*, No. 5997 (1954), 489.

carved, depicting the private and official life of the king. It also portrays a great winged and horned goddess suckling two royal infants.

In the eastern muniment room, a considerable distance from the other mythological texts, there was discovered an extensive mythological fragment, containing a dialogue between Baal and the goddess Anat. Another fragment describes Anat's conflict with the dragon Tannin.⁷

Mention may be made here of a peculiarity of the fifteenth- and fourteenth-century houses. Nearly all of them have a family vault, some under the courtyard, others under the house. These are solidly built of stone, and are very similar to individual graves in Crete. Their arches are almost Gothic in character. Some steps lead down into the vault. The dead were laid on the floor surrounded by weapons, tools, and articles which they might be thought to have need of in the world of the dead. Grave-robbers have removed everything of value that they could lay their hands on; but various items of pottery (of Mycenaean type), faience, ivory, and alabaster have been left.⁸

The dead were given careful tendance where they lay. At that time there was a general belief in western Asia that the dead needed food and drink, without which they would not be able to rest in peace but would wander about restlessly and be a potential danger. The inhabitants of ancient Ugarit were assiduous in this matter. Careful technical provision was made. A pipe of baked clay led down into the ground; libations (of water) were poured into the upper end so that they ran down into a large container which was built at the side of the vault. So that the dead might reach this container (which was usually a large clay jar), windows were cut in the vault facing the container. Certain graves had the

⁷ C. Virolleaud, *Syria*, Vol. XXX (1953), 187-95.

⁸ Claude F. A. Schaeffer, *The Cuneiform Texts of Ras Shamra-Ugarit* (London, 1939), 18.

container built into the wall, with a cup at hand for the dead to use.⁹ The water in the Ras Shamra area has a heavy lime content, and deposits of lime on the pipes show that they were much used.

Other objects which have been found indicate fertility ritual. Jars with the bottom knocked out were placed over holes in the ground, occasionally with an altar alongside. It appears that libations of wine, oil, water, or the blood of sacrificed animals, were poured down into the ground to increase the fertility of the fields and the pastures.

Other objects which have been excavated also show that a fertility cult was certainly practiced at ancient Ugarit. Many small gold ornaments worn by women have been found, representing a nude goddess, the familiar symbol of the fertility cult in western Asia. These trinkets were generally used as amulets. A very beautiful representation of the goddess was discovered in the excavations at Minet al-Beida, the port of Ugarit. It is an engraving on the lid of an ivory box showing a goddess wearing a dress of Mycenaean-Cretan pattern. In either hand she holds some ears of corn; and two (he-) goats are trying to reach up to them. It is impossible to determine the identity of the goddess with certainty, but at all events she is a fertility goddess. The style is Mycenaean, but no doubt this presented no difficulty for the internationally minded population of Ugarit.

Mention may also be made of a small statue of a seated goddess, probably Anat, Baal's consort, the goddess of war and fertility. The goddess is wearing on her head a stylized sheaf of corn. A similar headdress appears on another little statue, of bronze, found at Minet al-Beida. It represents the god Baal with his right hand held above his head and his left hand stretched out in front of him. As in other representations, the god no doubt originally held in his right hand the club which symbolizes thunder and in his left hand the spear which represents lightning. The little statue is elegantly

⁹ *Ibid.*, 49ff.

executed. Originally it was overlaid with silver, and the headdress with gold.

Another little figure of Baal which has been discovered shows the god in the same posture as the one just mentioned, and with his helmet in the form of a stylized wreath of corn. It is carved out of greenish steatite and attached to the head by means of the horns, which are of amber. The rest of the statue was overlaid with gold. A great amount of labor was expended on it, and it is in itself evidence of Baal's popularity.

Another object which has been discovered is a large stone slab with the figure of Baal carved on it in relief. According to Schaeffer it must have stood in the temple of Baal under an opening in the roof so that the rain could fall on it. Libations may also have been poured over it, and Schaeffer holds that there are traces of this on the top surface.¹⁰ Here, too, there are traces of Egyptian style. At this period Egyptian influence on Ugaritic art must have been very considerable. In this relief, however, the helmet is different in form from those in the two small statues, and is definitely western Asiatic in character. This is also true of the long dagger with point bent back which hangs from the god's belt. In his uplifted right hand Baal holds a thunderbolt and in his left hand a representation of lightning in the form of a spear. The horns on the helmet recall the bull, the symbol of fertility. The club and spear indicate that this is a deity of rain and thunder, who, by sending his rain, ensures growth and increase in the fields and pastures.

The discovery which more than any other has made the name of Ras Shamra known throughout the world is that of the collection of texts which were for the most part contained in the "library." This was a large and spacious building. As was customary in Ugarit, it had in the middle an open courtyard with a well. On three of the four sides of this courtyard there were large rooms with stone floors. Steps gave access to an upper floor. This build-

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 68.

ing, which was only a short distance from the temple of Baal, served as the residence of the chief priest, the school for scribes, and the library. The combination was a natural one, since the young priests and scribes were made to copy out the ancient texts to give them practice in the art of writing. Presumably the writing was done to dictation; and no doubt the young students had to learn the texts by heart, as the custom was in the ancient East, and, to some extent still is, e.g., in Mohammedan countries, where young students of the Koran have to learn the text by heart.

It is fortunate that the scribes of Ugarit borrowed their mode of writing from Mesopotamia, using a stylus on soft clay which was subsequently baked and thus rendered hard as stone. The clay tablets have withstood the effects of the variable climate of Syria and have survived unchanged till our own day. Nevertheless there are, unfortunately, many passages which are indecipherable and which cannot be reconstructed; but for this there are special reasons. The buildings where the tablets were found were burned by hostile intruders; the walls collapsed; and many of the clay tablets were crushed or damaged.

The tablets were arranged in the various rooms in accordance with a special system. There were collections of word lists and inventories, some of them written on very large tablets up to a height of forty centimeters. These included lists of prices and of ships, letters, and legal documents. In another building a tablet was discovered which contained prescriptions for the treatment of sick horses. The dictionaries give an indication of the difficulties occasioned by the many languages in Ugarit. There are texts in Sumerian, Accadian, Hurrian, Hittite, Egyptian, and languages which had previously been unknown to scholars.

The largest collection of texts was devoted to religious subjects. These were texts which the scribes had used for instruction, and for the most part were accounts of the life and activities of the Ugaritic gods. In a later section more will be said about the char-

acter of these texts which were written in a cuneiform script and language hitherto unknown.

The cuneiform characters could not be derived from any others known to scholars. They were about thirty in all. The fact that there were so few made it clear that the script was neither Sumerian nor Accadian. The words were also regularly divided from each other by a little vertical stroke, a feature not found in Accadian. It was also clear that the words were very short. These data immediately led scholars to the conclusion that the script was alphabetic and (because of the short words) that the language was Semitic. On this basis further research proceeded.

The first texts were published in April, 1930, in a belated number of the French archaeological journal, *Syria*. Before long the German professor, Hans Bauer of Halle, had worked out the main principles of decipherment, which he published in *Vossische Zeitung* for June 4, 1930. Early in the autumn of the same year he also published a book on the subject.¹¹

Bauer had correctly deciphered half of the characters. Most of those which had been wrongly identified were deciphered by the French scholar, E. Dhorme. The two men conflated their systems; and with the improvements which have since been made the decipherment may be said to be established in practically every detail.

Thus the way was cleared for a preliminary interpretation of the texts. They were published partly in *Syria*, partly as separate publications, by C. Virolleaud, who thus gave the first translation with a certain amount of annotation. Another French scholar, René Dussaud, shared in the work and provided comments on the texts. The director of the excavations, Claude F. A. Schaeffer, provided detailed reports of the discoveries.

¹¹ *Die Entzifferung der Keilschrifttafeln von Ras Shamra* (Halle a.S., 1930).

II.

DISCUSSION OF THE TEXTS

THE TEXTS WHICH WERE DISCOVERED were mainly cultic and mythological in character. They gave an insight into ancient Canaanite religion which for long had been a desideratum. What was previously known of that religion was mainly derived from the Old Testament. Canaanite religion was one of the chief targets of the prophetic polemic; and therefore it is of the utmost interest to have further information about it. Previously, the only source other than the Old Testament to which one could turn was Eusebius of Caesarea (A.D. 263-340), who was dependent on Philo of Byblus, who, in turn, was quoting a more or less legendary Phoenician, Sanchuniathon.¹ The new discoveries provided a wealth of detail about a religion of which little was previously known, and vividly illuminated the religious background against which the world of the Old Testament must be seen.

From the outset it was clear that the Ras Shamra texts were of considerable interest for Old Testament scholarship. Virolleaud and Dussaud were fully aware of this aspect of the matter. They were handling new material in a new language; but the new language displayed a close kinship with Hebrew; and recourse was often had to the latter more familiar language in order to determine the meaning of words and expressions in the Ras Shamra texts. In these circumstances it was inevitable that emphasis was laid on anything which looked like a point of contact with the Old Testament. This led to theories which were partly or wholly

¹ O. Eissfeldt, *Taautos und Sanchuniaton* (Berlin, 1952), 25ff.

wrong. This is the kind of thing which sometimes happens in the development of scholarship; but further investigation generally leads to the elimination of errors. So it was with several of Dussaud's and Virolleaud's most daring hypotheses, such as the one concerning the connection between Ugarit and the Negeb, and the speculations about Terah, which will be discussed below. These have now been rejected by all except their originators and a few other French scholars. The French archaeologist and Biblical scholar, R. de Vaux, has expressed the following frank judgement on those hypotheses: "*Tout cela sera passionnant, mais ne paraît pas se trouver dans le texte.*"²

In the earliest editions of the texts, the problem of their relationship to the Old Testament was frequently referred to in the annotations; and it was also discussed in various monographs. We shall now give a brief account of the most important of these.

The first was J. W. Jack's *The Ras Shamra Tablets and their Bearing upon the Old Testament*. (Old Testament Studies, I), Edinburgh, 1935. This work contains a considerable amount of interesting material; but when it was written the treatment of the texts was still tentative.

In 1937, René Dussaud published *Les découvertes de Ras Shamra (Ugarit) et l'Ancien Testament*, Paris, 1937 (second edition, 1941), in which he gives a popular account of the discoveries and, in particular, an examination of the texts. He finds a number of features which reappear in the Old Testament, including "Terah" as the name of a moon god. But other scholars have shown that Dussaud's theory on this latter point cannot be sustained, since in a number of contexts the word in question cannot be taken as a personal name but must be understood as a verb. Strong objections have also been advanced against Dussaud's interpretation of the Keret legend, which both he and Virolleaud still maintain. He thinks that Keret lived in the Negeb, the southernmost part of

² *Revue Biblique*, Vol. XLVI (1937), 444.

Palestine, from which he launched a campaign against Edom, farther south. Keret's object was to drive out the Terahites; and in this Dussaud sees a conflict between the adherents of El and Shapash on the one hand and on the other, the Terahites, the champions of the moon god.³ His view is that this reflects actual historical conditions at an early period when the Terahites were driven from the cities along the coast of Philistia.

Dussaud is recognized as an expert on the ancient Canaanite cult, and when he is discussing the Ugaritic cult it is clear that he is on ground which he knows thoroughly. He demonstrates the points of agreement in types of sacrifice and the terminology applied to them, and shows how many of the details of sacrificial ritual in Ugarit and Israel were the same. With justifiable satisfaction he points out that the new discoveries confirm the far-reaching correspondence between the most important types of sacrifice in Israel and their Canaanite counterparts which he himself had sought to demonstrate as early as 1921 in his book, *Les origines cananéennes du sacrifice israélite*.

But where he attempts historical reconstruction, particularly in relation to the Keret text, there can be no doubt that Dussaud has drawn far too venturesome conclusions which, on a number of points, cannot be sustained on a critical scrutiny of the evidence. This is still more true of his apologetic contentions,⁴ which, though they contain elements of truth, are particularly open to criticism.

The general approach of Dussaud's work is also found in Claude F. A. Schaeffer's Schweich Lectures for 1936, *The Cuneiform Texts of Ras Shamra-Ugarit*, London, 1939. As director of the excavations, Schaeffer provides a wealth of information about the discoveries and the archaeological aspects of the subject. In his interpretation of the texts he follows Viroilleaud and Dussaud

³ René Dussaud, *Les découvertes de Ras Shamra (Ugarit) et l'Ancien Testament*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1941), 160ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 191ff.

without any significant variation. But he is well aware that the understanding of these texts is beset by special problems of which full account must be taken if we are to keep on the right track. He mentions the dangerous tendency to modify the text slightly in order to get from it the desired meaning. "It should not be forgotten that the fragmentary state of many of the tablets, and the difficulties of translating a language that is often obscure, utilizing a dialect of limited resources, raise obstacles that are sometimes insurmountable in translation. It seems therefore necessary to give a word of warning to those who want to use the Ras Shamra texts to confirm what they call 'the verbal truth of the Bible.' Those who wish to handle our documents in this way must proceed with the greatest caution and absolute sincerity," says Schaeffer.⁵ This warning is still needed.

A slightly larger work in Danish on the Ras Shamra texts was different in character from those by the French scholars. This was F. F. Hvidberg's valuable monograph, *Graad og Latter i det Gamle Testamente: En studie i kanaanaeisk-israelitisk Religion [Weeping and Laughter in the Old Testament: A Study in Canaanite-Israelite Religion]*, Copenhagen, 1938. It was of fundamental importance for Scandinavian research in this field and is still of value.

Hvidberg sought to discover and delineate the main ideas in the Ugaritic texts. With profound penetration he recognized the heart of the matter. Instead of determining points of similarity in nomenclature and terminology, he concentrated on the main points in Canaanite religion as it appear in the Ras Shamra texts and compared them with the main points in the religion of Israel. In this way he produced a more accurate description and made a contribution to our understanding of both Canaanite and Israelite religion.

The lines on which Hvidberg worked may be appropriately indicated in his own words:

⁵ Schaeffer, *The Cuneiform Texts of Ras Shamra-Ugarit*, 77.

The present treatise is concerned in the first instance with the content of the longer texts from Ras Shamra, which describe Baal's death, resurrection, and enthronement, and with a definition of the character of these texts. They are cultic texts. Their importance lies first and foremost in the fact that they give us direct insight into the ancient cult of Phoenicia and Canaan. Presumably it is the ancient Canaanite autumnal festival which is here presented. The two emotional themes of the festival are weeping for the dead god and laughter over his resurrection and the divine marriage.⁶

The consequences of this approach for his view of the relationship with Israel's religion are also clear:

Since the Israelite tribes, after the invasion of Canaan, devoted themselves to agriculture, it is inherently probable that elements of the cult in which the death and resurrection of the god of the land were experienced and enacted, were absorbed by Israel, survived in some fashion in its syncretistic cult, and left their mark on the invaders' conceptions. This is not merely probable: it is incredible that it should not have happened. It seems, therefore, that a presentation of the religion of Israel should have this as its main theme: the way in which the Israelite tribes appropriated and reacted against the cult and the spiritual ideas which were associated with the death and resurrection of the Canaanite god.⁷

Hvidberg finds marked traces of syncretism in the Northern Kingdom and cites the Elephantine papyri in support of his view. These papyri from the Jewish colony at Elephantine in Egypt were written by exiles who may have come from Bethel in Israel, c. 630-622 B.C. Here the syncretism is manifest. Yahweh has a divine queen as His consort. Hvidberg also produces a number of passages in the Old Testament itself which indicate the influence of the Canaanite cult. He derives these passages from the historical books,

⁶ F. F. Hvidberg, *Graad og Latter i det Gamle Testamente: En Studie i kanaan-aeisk-israelitisk Religion* (Copenhagen, 1938), 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*

the Prophets, and the Psalms. He maintains, however, that there is no passage in the Old Testament where we find Yahweh represented as a dying and rising God.⁸

His observations in this connection are still valid:

In Israelite cultic practice, it was not the resurrection or renewal of Yahweh which was represented; but His saving acts on Israel's behalf were celebrated and the covenant was renewed. Yahweh came to stand outside and above the forces of nature. He is *Lord* over them; he is the *Giver* of the produce of the fields; it is He who opens and closes the womb. But He is not Himself the herbage or the bull. The prophets and the circles from which they came exercised a powerful reactionary influence in this regard in harmony with ancient Israelite tradition.

But even if there was in the death and resurrection of the deity something which Israel's God could not appropriate, or if in some places He did temporarily appropriate it only to reject it soon after, nevertheless deities which were alien to the true Israel exercised influence on and modified the conception of Yahweh's nature. Further the alien deities came in greater or lesser degree to stand alongside Yahweh during almost the entire period of the monarchy. Alongside the Yahweh cult many alien cults existed not only in Northern Israel but also in Judah. These included cults which were characterized by weeping over the dead god. Cultic lamentation and cultic weeping, and all that went with them, were so deeply implanted in the common life of Canaanite Israel that they left their stamp in various ways on Israelite belief and practice. No matter how great Yahweh became, and no matter how far Baal came to be in part absorbed in Him and in part expelled by Him, nevertheless the songs of lamentation sounded over the withered pastures and there was weeping over the seed which had been "buried," as had happened in the old days over Baal and Mot. Weeping and lamentation were preserved through the years like other ancient customs which belonged to farming life.⁹

⁸ So A. Vincent, *La Religion des Judéo-Araméens d'Elaphantine* (Paris, 1937).

⁹ Hvidberg, *Graad og Latter i det Gamle Testamente*, 118.

This passage well exemplifies Hvidberg's understanding of the Ras Shamra texts and the influence of Canaanite religion on Yahwism. This approach was shared by other Scandinavian scholars. It appears in Johs. Pedersen's articles "Canaanite and Israelite cultus,"¹⁰ "Die KRT Legende,"¹¹ and "Kana'anaeisk Religion,"¹² and in the work of Sigmund Mowinckel and of the present writer.¹³ Mention should be made of E. Hammershaimb's *Das Verbum im Dialekt von Ras Shamra*, Copenhagen, 1941. An interesting approach to the texts with "drastic reinterpretations" (Albright) has been made by F. Løkkegaard.¹⁴

An important contribution to the discussion was made by Ivan Engnell's *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East*, Uppsala, 1943. This cannot properly be described as a monograph on the Ras Shamra texts, since it includes a treatment of several ancient oriental religions and the texts belonging to them; but the main part of the book consists of an examination of the Ras Shamra texts, and Engnell has presented new and valuable theories about the interpretation of them as a whole and in detail. He holds that these texts must be interpreted in terms of a cultic pattern common to the ancient Near East, intimately connected with the king, who was regarded as of divine origin and who also played the part of the god in the dramatic enactment of the texts. The autumnal and New Year festival was the great annual occasion with which these texts were associated and at which they were used as cultic myths. Engnell has given a detailed discussion of the character of the texts, and his conclusion that they are cultic documents is in line with the views of Hvidberg, Pedersen, and Mowinckel.

¹⁰ *Acta Orientalia*, Vol. XVIII (1944), 1-14.

¹¹ *Berytus*, Vol. VI (1941), 63-105.

¹² *Illustreret Religionshistorie*, 2nd ed. (1948), 191-212.

¹³ *Norsk teologisk Tidsskrift* (1939), 16-19; (1940), 38-58; (1941), 129-57; (1942), 24-26.

¹⁴ See, e.g., *Studia Orientalia Ioanni Pedersen Septuagenario dicata* (1953), 219-35.

Further, he finds in them a cultic pattern and a royal ideology which, he maintains, also had a profound influence on Israel's religion, though much of this was eliminated in the Jerusalemite redaction to which the Old Testament writings were subjected. There can be no doubt that Engnell has here indicated factors of great importance for the understanding of Israel's religion.

Among other works in which parallels are traced between the *Ras Shamra* texts and the Old Testament we may note W. F. Albright's *Ayer Lectures, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, Baltimore, 1942 (third edition, 1953); J. H. Patton's *Canaanite Parallels in the Book of Psalms*, Baltimore, 1944; R. de Langhe's *Les textes de Ras Shamra-Ugarit, et leur rapports avec le milieu biblique de l'Ancien Testament*, I, II, Gembloux, 1945; John Gray's *The Legacy of Canaan* (Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum*, V), Leiden, 1957, and his many articles on the subject; and Edmond Jacob's *Ras Shamra-Ugarit et l'Ancien Testament*, Neuchâtel, 1960.¹⁵ The periodical literature is extensive; for details it must suffice here to refer to the bibliographies in, e.g., Claude F. A. Schaeffer's *Ugaritica*, I, Paris, 1939, the above-mentioned book by Ivan Engnell, and G. R. Driver's *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, Edinburgh, 1956.

In recent years some scholars have concentrated on the scrutiny of the texts from the standpoint of philology, history, and religion, without much application of the comparative method. They have held it to be more important and more necessary to determine what the texts actually say in order to provide a firmer basis for comparison at a later stage. It has also proved valuable to see the *Ras Shamra* texts in the context of what is otherwise known of the period from which they come and of the surrounding territories. Traces have been found of influence from Assyrian and Baby-

¹⁵ E.g. "Cultic Affinities between Israel and *Ras Shamra*," *Z.A.W.*, Vol. LXII (1949-50), 207-20.

lonian, and possibly also from Hittite and Hurrian religion.¹⁶

We mention here only a few of the works which are of chief importance for the interpretation of the Ras Shamra texts. The American scholar, Cyrus H. Gordon, prepared the first grammar, *Ugaritic Grammar* (Analecta Orientalia, 20), Rome, 1940, subsequently republished in a revised edition with an enlarged glossary and a comprehensive edition of the texts, *Ugaritic Handbook* (Analecta Orientalia, 25), Rome, 1947, and now in a still further revised edition, *Ugaritic Manual* (Analecta Orientalia, 35), Rome, 1955. It is an indispensable aid to the study of the Ras Shamra texts. Gordon has also published a good translation of the texts, *Ugaritic Literature*, Rome, 1949.

Good grammatical studies have also been published by the Hungarian scholar, J. Aistleitner, e.g., *Untersuchungen zur Grammatik des Ugaritischen*, Berlin, 1954. A. van Selms has discussed social conditions in *Marriage and Family Life in the Ugaritic Literature*, London, 1954.

In addition to a number of articles, J. Obermann has published *Ugaritic Mythology*, New Haven, 1948; and H. L. Ginsberg has written a number of articles on Ras Shamra and published the text of the Keret legend with translation and commentary (New Haven, 1946). He has also provided the translation of most of the Ras Shamra texts in the large collection of sources edited by Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton, 1950 (second edition, 1955).

T. H. Gaster has also contributed to various periodicals a number of articles on the texts. In his extensive work, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth, and Drama in the Ancient Near East*, New York, 1950, his contributions to the subject are presented as a whole. Here he examines most of the texts and shows how they correspond to the annual cycle which was presented dramatically. They belong to

¹⁶ See, e.g., Albrecht Goetze, *Hethiter, Churriter und Assyrier* (Oslo, 1936).

a definite cult pattern which was determined by the changes of the seasons and can be fully understood only against the background of the drama which was enacted. In his five-hundred-page work Gaster has assembled a mass of material and has attempted to put the texts into a larger context of cultural and historical development. This is indicated by the title of his work, *Thespis*, the name of the poet who was regarded in ancient times as the creator of tragedy.

As we have said, it is impossible to enumerate all the publications about the Ras Shamra texts; but some of the more recent contributions to the subject must be mentioned. The well-known German Old Testament scholar, Otto Eissfeldt, has published a number of very interesting works on the texts. *El im ugaritischen Pantheon*, 1951, is a study of the status and significance of the supreme deity. Similar works are the present writer's *Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts*, Copenhagen, 1952; U. Cassuto's *The Goddess Anath*, Jerusalem, 1953 (in Hebrew); and Marvin H. Pope's *El in the Ugaritic Texts* (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, II), Leiden, 1955.

The present writer has tried to show that a hidden struggle between El and Baal is going on in the Ugaritic Texts and that Baal is ultimately victorious.¹⁷ In his work on El, Pope writes:

As Kronos was deposed by Zeus, and as Kumarbi was apparently displaced by the Storm-god, so we believe, following the suggestion of CASSTUO and KAPELRUD's study of Baal, that the Ugaritic myths included an account of El's banishment at the hands of Baal. This important episode, as we have suggested, may actually be represented in the extant Ugaritic texts by the fragmentary fifth column of the text VI AB.¹⁸

Pope is of the opinion that El was deposed and banished to the

¹⁷ *Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts* (Copenhagen, 1952), pp. 75-78, 86-93, 130-35.

¹⁸ Marvin H. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts* (Leiden, 1955), 94.

nether world. He tries to localize El's abode in Afqa-el Yamma in Syria.¹⁹

Valuable editions and translations of the texts have been produced by G. R. Driver and John Gray. The latter has published *The KRT Text in the Literature of Ras Shamra: A Social Myth of Ancient Canaan* (Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui, V), Leiden, 1955. He holds that the first tablet of the Krt poem celebrates Karet's acquisition of a non-Semitic wife, sanctions such a marriage, and legitimizes the dynasty sprung from the union.²⁰ Gray therefore thinks it best to describe the text as a social myth. Its conservation was due to its regular use in given circumstances in the social life of the ancient Canaanite community, namely the wedding of the king. The wedding might reasonably be depicted as coinciding with the New Year festival; but in Gray's opinion the general tenor of the text and the fact that the sexual act is not stressed make it extremely improbable that there is any connection with a seasonal *hieros gamos*.²¹

In his edition and translation of the Ugaritic texts, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Old Testament Studies, No. 3), Edinburgh, 1956, G. R. Driver has come to no such definite conclusions about the Keret text. He holds, however, that the clue to the interpretation of the Baal-Anat poems may be sought in the struggle between Yam-Nahar, god of seas and rivers, including subterranean waters; Athtar, the deity who had charge of springs and wells; and Baal, the god of rain and storm. In Driver's opinion the poem is not a seasonal myth but "depicts the introduction of the youthful Baal as a god of fertility into the Ugaritic pantheon and the establishment of his supremacy, under El's suzerainty, over all other gods,

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 72-81.

²⁰ John Gray, *The KRT Text in the Literature of Ras Shamra: A Social Myth of Ancient Canaan* (Leiden, 1955), 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

exercising power over earth as god of rain, for rain is the ultimate source of the life-giving water which is essential to the whole of nature, however it may be distributed."²² Driver builds this explanation of the poem on hints given by T. H. Gaster in *Thespis*.

Full-scale excavations were begun again in 1948 after a long period of inactivity during the war. Since the texts previously discovered had been largely of one kind, it was almost to be expected that a collection of letters or records would be discovered. In fact Schaeffer did unearth some items of interest almost immediately. In November, 1949, he found a little tablet which contains the oldest known alphabet, from the fourteenth century B.C. The importance of this tablet is in inverse proportion to its size; and it at once gave rise to an intense discussion in learned periodicals.²³ During the excavations in 1951-53, over two hundred Accadian tablets were discovered. As indicated above, these are essentially historical in character and belong to the royal archives of Ugarit. They were published in 1955-56.²⁴ An indication of the contents has been given above.

²² G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh, 1956), 21.

²³ See, e.g., *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, CXVIII (1950), and following issues.

²⁴ Nougayrol, *Le palais royal d'Ugarit: Textes accadiennes et hourrites des Archives Est, Ouest et Centrales* (Paris, 1955-56), Mission de Ras Shamra, Vols. VI, IX.

III.

METHOD AND APPROACH

THE INTRODUCTORY SURVEY of the literature has already given us some indication of the method and approach which must be adopted. We now attempt a brief systematic presentation of these, so that the nature of the tasks for scholarship may be more clearly defined.

Some points are so self-evident that they should not really need to be mentioned; but they will be enumerated here, partly for the sake of completeness, and, not least, because of the tendency in some quarters to misunderstand and misinterpret. No one doubts or denies that the religion of Israel and that of ancient Canaan both had their own distinctive character and characteristics. It is also clear that the individual features of each of these religions must (like those of all other religions) be understood in terms of the whole, just as the whole must, in turn, be elucidated by the individual features. But this does not mean that the two religions in question existed in hermetically sealed, air-tight compartments. Both belonged to more or less the same cultural environment, and they were inevitably influenced by it. Moreover, they were in constant conflict with each other for centuries; and that fact could not but have important results. The contrasts were sharpened and emphasized in such a way as to be immediately evident to a superficial scrutiny. But much else also took place. An unobtrusive influence was exercised by each on the other. So extensive was the influence to which Israel was subject that there was constant need for reformation of the Yahweh religion lest it should be domi-

nated by the influence of the Canaanite and other religions. Ideas and conceptions were borrowed, as were cultic practices, words, and expressions. The nature and extent of this influence must be determined in each individual case. It is impossible to generalize about it.

We must also remember that although our aim in studying an Old Testament text must be to discover what the author meant, we cannot attain it without appreciating the associations which his words and expressions held. In this way we can understand how his contemporaries used these words and expressions, the ideas and conceptions which were linked with them, and also discover whether the author used them in another way and with a different meaning. Here the *Ras Shamra* texts have given considerable help towards the elucidation of a number of conceptions which had previously been imperfectly understood. How important these conceptions are may be seen if we recall the fact that the *Ras Shamra* texts have provided essentially new portraits of two leading figures in the pantheon, El and Baal. It would be short-sighted to overlook the importance of this fact. New information has also been discovered bearing on other fields. Our present task is to find out the extent to which fresh light has been shed on Old Testament conceptions and how the interpretation of the Old Testament is affected.

To undertake such an inquiry also means investigating the points of opposition, so that we can establish clearly where the distinctive character of the Old Testament presents a contrast with the *Ras Shamra* texts. It is also of interest to inquire whether the Old Testament may have been influenced by Canaanite religion precisely at those points where it most decisively differs from it. The relationships are probably more complicated than at first sight appears.

It has been pointed out that identity of words and expressions need not indicate any influence or connection, since the same words and expressions may have different meanings in different contexts.

It must be admitted that this is true; but when we are dealing with the same cultural area we should not simply assume it. In every instance we must first investigate the facts; and only in the light of such investigation can we conclude that in that instance any given word or expression has different meanings in the two religions. The Canaanite and Israelite religions not only had the same background but came into contact with each other so much that we must assume a considerable similarity in a number of their conceptions and ideas. It is methodologically unsound to make any other assumption, though naturally in each individual instance the details must be scrupulously examined. Some of these points will be discussed in what follows.

IV. THE DEITIES OF RAS SHAMRA: OLD TESTAMENT PARALLELS

THE RAS SHAMRA TEXTS do not present a comprehensive survey of the ancient Canaanite pantheon; but they do give vivid glimpses of the life of the gods. Some leading figures stand out clearly; and we get a fairly definite picture of their nature and meaning. This is true of the supreme god in the Ugaritic pantheon, El, and of his consort, Ashera. It is also true of the young vegetation deity, Baal, or Aliyan Baal, as he is often called. In the texts he is identified with Hadad, the west Semitic rain, storm, and fertility god, known among the eastern Semites as Adad. His consort is Anat, the war-like goddess of vegetation.

All these deities have their own personal character. They are associated with specific natural phenomena; but in the developed myths these natural phenomena are interpreted in personal terms. The individual deities appear as clearly delineated figures, recognizable not only by the places they occupy in the pantheon but also by certain special traits which are characteristic of them. This cannot be said of the deities who are on the periphery of the pantheon. There the outlines are far from clear, and often we have only names to guide us.

BAAL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament the word "Baal," both as a name and as an epithet, is used in a variety of ways. It can mean "master," "head of a household," "husband" (Gen. 20:3; Exod. 21:3, 22; II Sam. 11:26, etc.). It is also used of "landed proprietor," one who

is master of a specific area (Josh. 24:11; Judg. 9:2; I Sam. 23:11ff., etc.). The latter use became more general so that it applied to property of any kind (Exod. 21:28f., 34, 36; Judg. 19:22ff., etc.). It was even extended to apply to one who had special skill in a particular activity, as when Joseph is called *ba'al h^alômôt*, "a master of dreams" (Gen. 37:19; cf. Gen. 49:23; Exod. 24:14, etc.). The term "Ba'al" was also applied to any one of those beings which were thought of as being associated with springs, trees, groves, and particularly fertile places. Each of them ruled over his own little region; and in this use *ba'al* is not a proper noun but a generic term. These beings seem to have been closely linked with the life and belief of the common people; and from an early period they were associated with agriculture and the agricultural cult. They are often mentioned in the Old Testament; and belief in them seems to have persisted in Canaan. The fact that they are referred to in the plural seems in the great majority of instances to be an indication that it really is beings of this kind who are so designated (cf. Judg. 2:11, 3:7, 8:33, 10:6, 10; I Sam. 7:4; 12:10; I Kings 18:18, etc.). Complete certainty on the point is not possible, because the expression *habb^e 'ālim* can indicate both a single great Baal and also several minor ones; and a consideration of the individual passages is called for to establish which meaning is appropriate. Still more uncertainty attaches to the expression *habba'al*, which also occurs frequently (cf. Judg. 2:13, 6:31f.; I Kings 18:21, 26; II Kings 21:3, 23:4f.; Jer. 2:8, 7:9, 11:13, 17; 12:16, etc.). In his new Hebrew Lexicon, Ludwig Köhler lists all these passages under the heading "the nameless numina." In all probability this treatment is purely formal and based on the use of the noun with the definite article (*habba'al*), but it is hardly tenable if we consider content as well as form. If we examine the passages mentioned we shall soon recognize that they are concerned with intense conflicts between Yahwism and the religion which bore the impress of Canaanite influence. The many indications of sharp contrast indicate that the

adherents of Yahwism saw here something more than a conflict with a localized cult.

There may be a reference to a local cult in the account in chapter 6 of Judges in the description of how Gideon broke down the altar of Baal and cut down the sacred pole. But the narrative in chapter 18 of I Kings about Elijah's mighty conflict with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel points to an opposition of greater dimensions. Elijah's struggle was not against a relatively unimportant local numen, but against Baal, the god of rain and fertility, one of the supreme divine figures of the ancient Near East. Elijah's whole struggle is seen in a false perspective if we do not recognize this fact. He was at grips with an opponent whose power and importance were manifest to all who were present and to those who heard the narrative. It was for this deity that Manasseh erected altars in Jerusalem (II Kings 21:3) which Josiah and Hilkiah subsequently pulled down (II Kings 23). Jeremiah's campaign against Baal and the fertility cult also becomes more comprehensible when it is realized that "Baal" is the designation not of a minor, local deity but of one who played a significant role in the religion both of the Canaanites and of their neighbors. That role is explicitly indicated in the Old Testament. In Jeremiah chapter 23, verse 27, Yahweh says that the fathers had forgotten Yahweh's name for that of Baal. This gives us a brief glimpse of an age-long rivalry between Yahweh and Baal and of a real conflict to decide which of them should be Israel's God. In that conflict Yahweh was eventually the victor, but it was a hard and protracted struggle which called for a powerful effort from Yahweh's adherents. It continued throughout Israel's history after the settlement and did not end until Israel became a religious community.

From time to time Baal appears in the Old Testament in rather clearer outlines, particularly when he has a specially close connection with some large and important city, either in Canaan or in

one of the neighboring countries. The name of the city in question is often coupled with Baal, e.g., Baal-Peor (Num. 25:3, 5; Deut. 4:3; Hos. 9:10). In Shechem he was called Baal-berith, "Lord of the covenant" (Judg. 8:33, 9:4). The city god of Tyre was perhaps called simply *habba'al* (I Kings 16:31f.; 19:18, 22:54; II Kings 10:18f., 17:16). In the Old Testament the god of the Philistine city of Ekron is called *ba'al z'ebul 'lôhé 'ekrôn*, "the fly Baal, god of Ekron" (II Kings 1:1, 2, 3, 6, 16). The New Testament shows that this title, "the fly-Baal," may be a distortion of *ba'al z'ebul* (Matt. 10:25, 12:24, 27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15, 18f.). This is further confirmed by the Ras Shamra texts, where we find the form *zbl. b'l*, presumably with the meaning "Baal the prince," or "chief" (68:8, 133:10, 137:38, 43). If this translation, on which the leading scholars are agreed, is correct, this is yet another indication of the important position which Baal occupied. It emphasizes the point made above, that in the Old Testament the term *ba'al* does not merely describe a local numen, but in very many instances refers to the great god, Baal.

In this connection a further observation may be made. There are many Israelite personal names which contain Baal as an element in them. These occur with remarkable frequency in the early period of the monarchy; and it is not only opponents of Yahwism who bear such names, but members of the royal family. This is true of the houses of both Saul and David. There can be no doubt that a special significance attaches to this fact.¹ One of Saul's sons was called Meribaal (Great is Baal) altered in the Old Testament to Mephibosheth (II Sam. 21:8). Jonathan's son had the same name (II Sam. 4:4, 9:6f., etc.). Another of Saul's sons was called Eshbaal, which in II Samuel is changed to Ishbosheth; (cf. II Sam. 2-4 with I Chron. 8:33, 9:39). One of David's sons was called Beeliada

¹ This question is exhaustively discussed by H. S. Nyberg in his article, "Zum Religionskampf im Alten Testament," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, Vol. XXXV (1938), 329-87.

(I Chron. 14:7), which in II Samuel chapter 5, verse 16, appears as Eliada. Presumably the writer of Samuel consistently avoided names compounded with Baal as far as was possible. In many instances he changed or distorted them. When the element Baal occurs in a name, he generally replaces it with *bōšet*, which means "shame." The reason for this can only be that he thought of the name of Baal as associated with a foreign god.

This appears in an interesting way in the story about Gideon in chapter 5 of Judges. He is given the additional name of Jerubbaal, ostensibly because he broke down Baal's altar and contended with Baal (Judg. 6:32). Either this is simply popular etymology or else it is the writer's attempt to account for a name which was bestowed upon Gideon and which was so firmly rooted in tradition that it could not be disposed of. It is theoretically possible to interpret the name Jerubbaal as meaning "he who contends with Baal," but it is highly improbable. "Baal's champion" is better; but perhaps the verbal element in the name should be connected with the Assyrian *rābu*, in which case the meaning would be "Baal rewards," or "Baal requites." In II Samuel, as might be expected, the form Jerubbesheth appears (11:21). How was it possible that Saul and David, who themselves were Yahweh worshippers, should give their sons names compounded with the name of the god Baal? There is, in fact, only one possible explanation. In their time Yahweh must have been identified with Baal. Yahweh had absorbed the mightiest and most important of the gods of Canaan. We know that the same thing happened to Shelem, the ancient god of Jerusalem, who was also known as El and El Elyon, names which were transferred to Yahweh. Good instances are again afforded by the names of David's sons. Abshalom (Absalom) and Shelomoh (Solomon), the two best known sons of David, bore names which included that of the supreme god of Jerusalem, who, accordingly, was identified with Yahweh. Less familiar are Elishua (II Sam. 5:15; I Chron. 14:5) and Elishama (II Sam. 5:16; I

Chron. 3:8), which are further examples of the fact just noted.

That Baal could be identified with Yahweh in this way shows that he must have been an important god at the time when the Israelites settled in Canaan and consolidated their position there. Hitherto the difficulty had been that we knew relatively little about this Baal, apart from the fact that he was a fertility god. Now so much information about him has come to light from the Ras Shamra texts that we can form a reasonably clear picture of this god, whom the prophets of Israel regarded as a serious opponent of Yahweh. This makes possible a better understanding of many points in Israel's religion, not least in relation to the prophetic polemic.

BAAL IN THE RAS SHAMRA TEXTS

In the Ras Shamra texts, too, there are instances of *b'l* used as a common noun. Probably the word is so used in text no. 14 (Gordon). But such occurrences are quite overshadowed by the overwhelming number of instances where the word is applied to a specific god, prominent in the Ugaritic pantheon, Baal the god of rain and fertility.

In the texts which have been published so far, the term *b'l* occurs about 150 times, whereas the expression *aliyan ba'al*, "Baal the strong," is found some 70 times. Altogether the name Baal, alone or in composite forms, occurs 240 times. Other names and epithets for the same god occur 80 times. Thus there can be no doubt that in Ugarit his principal name was Baal. This is also evident from the superscription to text no. 62, *lb'l*, "for Baal" or "concerning Baal." In general the terms are used interchangeably, not least where required by the parallelism. Virolleaud and Dussaud, the first editors of the texts, regarded Baal and Aliyan Baal as two separate gods; but in this they were quite certainly wrong, as is evident from the parallelism between the two names in many passages (e.g., 67:VI:8-10).

In about twenty passages Baal is called Hadad or described by a

compound expression which includes that name. Hadad was the ancient Semitic god of storm and tempest; and the fact that Baal was identified with him gives a clear indication of Baal's character. The most common form of the name in Ugaritic was *hd*, which presumably must be vocalized as Haddu. The identification of Baal and Hadad must have taken place long before the Ras Shamra texts were written down. The process is complete; and the writer obviously has no feeling that in using the two names he is speaking of different gods. For him they are only two names for the same god.

Baal is also often referred to by a designation of a type very commonly used in the ancient Near East, *bn. dgn*, "son of Dagon." "Dagon" occurs in the Old Testament as the name of a god of the Philistines (Judg. 16:23; I Sam. 5:2-7; I Chron. 10:10).² As the name indicates (Dagon = corn), he was a corn and fertility god. He must have been a far more prominent deity than the texts suggest. Apart from the designation *bn. dgn*, his name occurs in the Ras Shamra texts very infrequently and only incidentally. On the other hand there have been excavated at Ras Shamra two large temples, both in dominating situations high upon the mound. As one would expect from the texts, one was dedicated to Baal. The other was dedicated to Dagon. Thus there must have been a cult of Dagon; and it may be that texts will one day be found which tell of this god. Two stelae dedicated to Dagon have also been discovered.

The designation *bn. dgn* implies some very important things about Baal's nature. El was the supreme deity in the Ugaritic pantheon, and the other gods were thought of as his sons. Not so Baal, who is described as the son of the ancient leading Amorite god, Dagon. Mari on the Euphrates was for a long period the center of Amorite culture, and outstanding rulers such as Hammurabi of Babylon and Shamshi-Adad of Assyria were of Amorite origin.

² See further, Hartmut Schmökel, *Der Gott Dagon: Ursprung Verbreitung und Wesen Seines Kultes* (Borna-Leipzig, 1928).

There can be no doubt that, at the beginning of the second millennium B.C., the Amorites exercised some influence in Ugarit. It seems that Dagon entered the Ugaritic pantheon as an alien and subsequently gained a leading position in it. El, who had long been supreme, began to recede into the background, while Dagon's son Baal became prominent. Baal was closely associated with Sapan, "the mountain of the gods of the north." There he ruled as king (49:I:29ff.). There he had his dwelling (51:IV:19); and there Anat buried him after his death (62:I:4ff.). Accordingly, he is often called *b'l. spn*, Baal Sapan. There are also references in the Old Testament to a mountain of the gods in the north (cf. Isa. 14:13; Ezek. 1:4); but there it came to be replaced by Zion, which took over the role Sapan had played.

Of the other titles we may mention *zbl. b'l*, referred to on page 35 of the present volume. Probably this is an abbreviated form of *zbl. b'l. ars* "the prince" or the lord of the land or of the world. (49:I:14ff.; 'nt:I:3ff., etc.). This title is used especially in connection with Baal's sojourn in, and return from, the underworld.

Another title which appears with surprising frequency (fourteen times) is *rkb. rpt*, "he who mounts the clouds." To this there is an exact parallel in the Old Testament, *rōḳēḇ b'ā'ōḇōt* (Ps. 68:5) referring to Elohim as riding on the clouds. Psalm 68 contains many ancient features, and there is much in its figurative language which is certainly derived from ancient Semitic mythology.

Baal is also referred to as a bull. Before his descent under the earth, he leaps upon the young heifer, the goddess Anat (67:v:17ff.), and a calf is born (76:III; 20ff.).

Baal had a goddess as his partner, unlike Yahweh, who never had a consort. (Admittedly, the Jewish colony at Elephantine in Egypt tried to provide Yahweh with a female partner; but this fact played no part in the historical development of the religion.) In every situation (with the exception of a special instance in the Dan'il text) the goddess Anat stood by Baal's side. She had an

important part to play, and is one of the leading characters in the texts. From ancient times the female deities were exceedingly popular; and evidently this was also true of Anat.

Like Ishtar, and, earlier still, Inanna (in Sumer), Anat was the goddess of war, love, and fertility. She struck down Baal's enemies; and often we may well wonder whether it was she or Baal who in fact won the victories. There is a detailed description of how she mourned when Baal was dead; and in the cultic drama the person who represented the goddess presumably led the rites of mourning in which the entire cultic assembly shared.

The various representations of Baal on stelae and the like which have been discovered at Ras Shamra show him holding a club in his right hand and a stylized lightning flash with a spearhead in his left hand. These are the attributes of the god of rain, storm, and thunder. On his head he wears a helmet with horns, which indicate his intimate association with the bull, the symbol of fertility. It is also explicitly stated in one of the texts that Baal is the one who determines when the rain will fall, "who lets his voice resound in the clouds and hurls the lightning down to the earth" (IIAB = 51:V:68ff.). He gives the rain (126:III:5-9) and when it does not come the trees and plants wither away (67:II:3ff.). This happens when the god descends under the earth; but as soon as he returns the situation changes: "the heavens rain oil, and the valleys are full of honey" (49:III:6ff.).

The character of a fertility deity figures largely in the picture we get of Baal. But it was not only in virtue of this characteristic that he acquired his outstanding position in the pantheon. The old supreme deity, El, is also called *tor*, the bull, and thus was associated with the fertility cult.

The leading position which Baal came to occupy among the gods of Ugarit was attained as the result of a conflict. Changes of this sort occur frequently in the mythology of the ancient Near East. The young god would at times challenge the old occupant

of the supreme position and overcome him. Another possibility was that the young god would fight against a monster, generally a sea monster, whom none of the other gods could master. A third possibility was that the dethroned deity would not accept defeat and would enlist help to overthrow the aspirant to leadership. Instances of the first and third possibilities are found in Hittite-Hurrian religion, and of the second in Babylonian religion (Marduk's conflict with the sea-monster Tiamat). Sometimes the different types are combined.

Baal was involved in many conflicts. After his return from the underworld he deposed Attar the pretender who had occupied the throne in his absence. He also engaged in a violent conflict with Mot, which ended in the suppression of the latter.

When Baal had to descend to the underworld, Mot taunted him and reminded him of the victory he had won over Lotan "the twisting serpent" (67:I:iff.). In the texts, however, there is no description of any such conflict with Lotan. Anat asserts that she was present and struck down the monster; and she is called Anat-Lotan (9:17). The name Lotan also occurs in the Old Testament in the form Leviathan (Isa. 27:1; Pss. 74:14; 104:26; Job 3:8, 40:25). The monster is also called *tnn*, Tannin ('nt:III:37), another name which occurs in the Old Testament (Isa. 51:9; Jer. 51:34; Ps. 74:13; Job 7:12).

Baal's chief conflict was against "Prince Sea," *zbl. ym*. There is reason to suppose that this Prince Sea is regarded as identical with Lotan and Tannin.³ He was a member of the Ugaritic pantheon; and offerings to him are prescribed in the sacrificial lists (1:13; 9:6). This accords with the Babylonian myth, in which Tiamat is one of the gods. The similarities between the conflicts waged by Baal and Marduk are many; and broadly speaking they belong to the second of the three types mentioned above.

³ See T. H. Gaster, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth, and Drama in the Ancient Near East* (New York, 1950), 186.

Prince Sea sent his emissaries to the assembly of the gods and demanded supreme power. The gods bowed low before them and were prepared to surrender.⁴ But Baal protested and told the gods to lift up their heads. It appears that Prince Sea had received some support from the supreme god, El. The former had asked that Baal should be handed over to him; and El was prepared to agree to this (137:36ff.). The result was that Baal went to fight against his challenger. Just as Marduk received help from the other gods, and powerful magic weapons, support was also given to Baal. Katir-wa-Hasis, the divine smith and master builder, fashioned a club for him.⁵ It was not sufficiently powerful, however; and Prince Sea withstood the blow. Hastily Katir-wa-Hasis had to fashion another club, over which he recited still more potent spells. This one proved to be adequate. After one powerful blow between the eyes, Prince Sea collapsed and was destroyed.

The conflict had an important effect on Baal's position, both because the dangerous opponents were now removed and also because El was involved. This latter point links the conflict with the third of the types mentioned above. Baal and his helpers were more powerful than El and his favorites.

The conflict and the victory had as their end the securing of the young god's place in the pantheon. The myth of the conflict with the dragon is a regular element in the mythology of the ancient Near East. The fight with the monster must be won and the powers of chaos repulsed. Like all real myths this had its place in the cult, in which it played an important part. The struggle between the two powerful contestants was a dramatic climax in the cultic enactment.

The myth of the conflict with the dragon was also known in Israel. It can hardly be a coincidence that the primeval deep, *t'hôm*, is mentioned in the creation narrative in the first chapter of Gene-

⁴ Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature* (London, 1954), no. 137.

⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 68.

sis. There are also more explicit references to the conflict in other passages, for example:

Thou, Elohim (= Yahweh), art my King from of old,
Thou who dost accomplish deeds of salvation on the earth.
It was Thou who didst divide the sea by Thy might,
and didst shatter the heads of the dragons in the waters.

It was Thou who didst crush the heads of Leviathan
and didst give him as food for the jackals.

Both Leviathan and *tannīnīm* (the dragons) are mentioned here as Yahweh's opponents, who are struck down and destroyed like Tiamat. Equally illuminating is a passage of Deutero-Isaiah, the great unknown prophet whose teaching is found in chapters 40 through 55 of Isaiah. It is a prayer for help containing a reference to Yahweh's mighty acts in the past.

Was it not Thou that didst cut Rahab in pieces,
That didst pierce the dragon?
Was it not Thou that didst dry up the sea
the waters of the great deep,
that didst make the depths of the sea a way
for the redeemed to pass over?

Here Rahab, Tannin, and Tehom are all mentioned; and the entire complex of ideas is as clear as could be desired. At the same time the passage indicated effectively how Israel freed itself from the spirit of the ancient mythology, and put the material in a new perspective. Yahweh had performed mighty deeds and had established His position thereby. But in Israel the themes of the conflict with the dragon and of creation were subordinate to Yahweh's mighty work in history. Yahweh's claim upon his people is based upon the victory He won when he rescued them from bondage in Egypt. When He made a way for them across the Red Sea and saved them from the pursuing Egyptians, He accomplished a work

which for Israel was far more illustrious than any mythical victory over the dragon. Accordingly, the Exodus from Egypt and the festival which was associated with it (*pesah*, Passover) came to occupy a special position in the Israelite cult. The cult was thus given a historical foundation and a historical background, while the mythological element was subordinated to it. The account of the Exodus contains obvious mythological traits, but the Israelites regarded it as historical.

Some scholars have maintained that the account in the *Ras Shamra* texts of the conflict between Baal and Prince Sea also reflects historical events. On this view it relates how the people of Ugarit repulsed seafaring peoples who tried to establish themselves in the city.⁶ But this interpretation is untenable. The conflict with the dragon is a familiar motif, which played the same part in Ugarit as elsewhere in the ancient Near East, where it formed part of a larger whole. Within the cult it belonged to a major festal complex, in which it was a dramatic climax leading on to the enthronement of the deity and his assumption of power.

The Babylonian myth tells how, when Marduk had overthrown Tiamat, the Anunnaki (the gods of the underworld) built for him Esagila, the famous temple of Marduk at Babylon. In the *Ras Shamra* texts Baal complains to Anat that he has no house (i.e., temple). She promises to help him, and appeals to El, but without success. Where Anat failed, however, Ashera succeeded; for on this occasion, remarkably enough, she was prepared to intervene on Baal's behalf. El gave permission, and Baal was told that he must find builders. From the mountains he would get gold, silver, and lapis-lazuli to beautify the house. Baal summoned Katir wahasis, who at once set to work with choice cedars from Syria and Lebanon (51:VI:18ff.). Before long the temple was complete, and Baal rejoiced. The disagreement between him and the divine master builder concerned a window in the roof, which Baal did

⁶ Cf. J. Obermann in *J.A.O.S.*, Vol. LXVII (1947), 205.

not want but which he finally accepted. The point of this is not clear; but presumably the window is connected with rain and fertility (cf. the reference in Genesis chapter 7, verse 11, to the windows of heaven being opened.)

Baal then invited the gods to a great feast to celebrate the dedication of his temple. It began with the sacrificial slaughter of many animals—oxen, calves, sheep, goats, and kids. All the gods, “the seventy sons of Ashera,” assembled and joined in the feast, which ended in great debauchery.

There can be little doubt that both the feast and the dedication of the temple formed part of the cult. Here the text clearly reflects cultic usage at an annual festival with abundant offerings, when the temple was reconsecrated and the entire community of gods and men assembled to share in communal meals. The aim was to reinforce the holiness of the temple and to ensure fertility and procreation in the coming year.

The conflict with Prince Sea, the victory over him, the building of the temple, and its subsequent dedication are characteristic elements in what is related about Baal. Nevertheless it may be said that the outstanding features in the entire picture are his death and descent into the depths of the earth and his return thence. These were features which were closely connected with the cycle of the seasons, agriculture, pastoral life, and fertility generally, and which were therefore of special importance for all who took part in the cult. It was a matter of life and death for them, affecting the basic necessities for survival in a land which depended on a prolonged winter rainfall each year. Because of the possibility that the rains would fail and drought and bad harvests ensue, it was necessary to secure in advance the help of all the favorable powers and to give a dramatic representation of the kind of future which was desired. The cult was not simply a drama; it was a creative enactment intended to bring about a favorable future.

The intimate connection with the cycle of the seasons is re-

vealed in many ways. Baal, the mighty warrior, must yield to Mot when his time comes. When Mot demands that Baal should descend into the depths of the earth, no conflict ensues. Baal, who on other occasions is so bellicose and warlike, is now incapable of any resistance. When challenged by Mot, he simply surrenders (51:VII:48ff.). His time is over; and he, so to speak, fades from the scene. There seems to be no reasonable doubt that we may recognize here a connection with the alternation of the seasons, the rainy season passing away before the onset of summer's heat. Some scholars (e.g., C. H. Gordon and G. R. Driver) maintain that the reference here is to a period of seven years. According to Gordon, "drought and famine are regularly represented as seven-year scourges in the Ugaritic texts." He therefore sums up: "Baal is a fertility but not a seasonal god."⁷

Mot asserts that he will take vengeance on Baal because Baal struck and destroyed Lotan, the twisting serpent (67:I:1ff.). Lotan represented the powers of chaos and the underworld, to which, therefore, it is clear that Mot also belonged. He is the god of death and of the underworld, of drought and of the decline of vitality.

Mot invited Baal to eat and drink along with his (Mot's) brothers in the underworld (67:I:24ff.). Further, it is stated that "the underworld had already opened its mouth to swallow him" (67:II:2ff.). Baal was incapable of resistance; he could only reply, "Thy slave am I" (*'bdk. 'an*, 67:II:12). It is not surprising that Mot gloated over his opponent's weakness (67:II:20).

Baal was ordered to take everything that was connected with him down into the depths of the earth: his daughters, the clouds, the wind, the storm, and the rain. The situation could hardly be more clearly described: the season of drought has come; the rain and the clouds have vanished; the vegetation is scorched by the sun's heat.

⁷ Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature*, 4. My arguments against this view are presented in my book, *Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts*, 128-30.

Before Baal descended into the earth, he copulated with a heifer (i.e., the goddess Anat) so that by his last act he might ensure that fertility would not entirely perish from the earth. Here Baal is thought of as the bull, the symbol of fertility.

How Baal met his fate is not clear from the texts. It may be that something is recorded about it in the difficult text, Gordon, no. 75; but of that no entirely satisfactory interpretation has so far been advanced. The text which tells about this sequence of events, Gordon, no. 67, is unfortunately damaged at this point; and about thirty lines are missing. The thread of the narrative is taken up again at the point where the news of Baal's death was brought to El.

It might have been expected that El would be overjoyed to receive such news; the young god who had aspired to leadership was dead and gone. But here again we see how closely these texts are linked with the cult. What had to be expressed in the cult in connection with Baal's death was weeping and lamentation. At this point the appropriate action was mourning. El, the supreme god, had himself to set the example and show what had to be done (67:VI:11ff.). He descended from his throne and sat on the ground. He poured dust and ashes on his head and put on sackcloth. He lacerated himself, making cuts on his face, his arms, his breast, and his back. He cried aloud and lamented: "Baal is dead. Who will be the people of Dagan's son? Who will be the multitudes of Baal?" (67:VI:23ff.). This seems to be a cultic shout, intended to be taken up by the worshippers. This is confirmed by the fact that Anat repeated this ejaculation and the same actions. Like El, she wanted to descend into the earth to find Baal. She received help from the deity who was in a position to help her, the sun goddess Shapash, "the luminary of the gods." They found him in "the green meadows." Anat asked Shapash to help her to lift Baal on her shoulders (62:8ff.); whereupon she carried Baal away to the heights of Sapan, where he had lived and reigned; and there she buried him and wept over him (62:15ff.). She then offered ample

sacrifice of six different kinds of animal, which are rhythmically enumerated in the text, each line being followed by the refrain, "as an offering for Aliyan Baal" (62:18-29). This is a significant feature in the text and in the cult, as is indicated by the regular and rhythmical form.

It is probable that at this point the mourning and lamentation of the worshippers reached a climax of intensity which was resolved in a comprehensive sacrificial ceremony. But this was not the end. Death and destruction did not have the last word. Neither the text nor the cult stopped at this point. Anat repeated the cultic cry in El's presence: "Dead is Aliyan Baal; perished is the prince, lord of the earth" (49:I:13-15). Bitterly she exclaimed, "Let Ashera and her sons rejoice!" This seems to be a catchword leading to what follows. Ashera was immediately summoned; and El discussed with her which of her sons was fit to be king. Attar was chosen, although he was not really suitable. His function was simply to serve as a substitute during Baal's absence. He was not a serious rival to Baal; nor was he treated as a serious adversary.

Anat was not content to leave things as they were. Indefatigably she sought to bring about Baal's return. She begged Mot to give her Baal back from the realm of death, and Mot contemptuously refused. The burning heat of the sun continued for days and months; but as they passed the sands were running out for Mot himself (49:II:24ff.). Anat fell upon him:

She seizes the god Mot
with a sword she cleaves him,
with a sieve she scatters him,
with fire she burns him,
with millstones she grinds him,
in the field she sows him,
so that the birds may eat his remains. (49:II:30ff.)

It is clear that Mot is here treated like corn. This would raise a problem if Mot were only the god of death, drought, and the

underworld. It has been suggested that Mot here carries the stamp of his opponent, from whom he has borrowed certain features.⁸ It is more probable that we have here an indication of Mot's own character. He represents the dry season of the year, summer, with its drought, but also with the ripening fruit and corn. Summer had other aspects besides drought and death; and those other aspects are reflected in Mot's character. Baal represented the rainy season and fertility; and he and Mot alternated in the same way as, for instance, the perennial antagonists Horus and Seth in Egyptian religion.⁹

Thus Baal and Mot together represented the annual cycle as it was experienced in lands such as Syria and Palestine. Baal's descent to the underworld was an event which was intimately connected with the daily life of the ancient agricultural community. It was bound up with the order of the changing seasons and with the fear and hope of those whose existence was dependent on the coming of rain at the right time and on fertility in field and pasture. Fear and hope were expressed in the cult, the medium through which practically all religious life found expression in those ancient times.

Men's hopes and dreams are directly expressed in the text. Even during Baal's sojourn in the underworld, the hope of his early return is alive. In a dream El sees the heavens raining oil and the valleys filled with honey (49:IV:6ff.). Once more, everything is summed up in the cultic cry: "Where is Aliyan Baal? Where is the prince, lord of the earth?" (49:IV:28ff., 39ff.). The time had come for a change in the situation. Baal was needed. Life could not continue without him. He had to be recalled. It had been necessary that he should descend into the earth when his time was over. Now the time had come for his return, to which everyone was looking

⁸ Gaster, *Thespis*, 124.

⁹ Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature* (Chicago, 1948), 21ff.

forward with joy. El knew from his dream that Baal would soon return, and was overjoyed at the thought (49:III:14ff.). He told Anat, Baal's consort, who was waiting impatiently, to get Shapash, the sun goddess, to help to find Baal. The sun goddess was willing, and Baal was found; but unfortunately we do not know where or how, because this part of the text has been damaged. In the next passage which is legible, Baal himself is present. He was furious, like Telepinus the fertility god of the Hittites and Hurrians when he was roused from his sleep by the sting of a little bee. Quickly Baal seized Ashera's son Attar and struck him down before ascending the throne once more.

Telepinus' rage was mollified by a complicated ritual, which is carefully described in the relevant text. The dramatic representation of the mollification of Baal was clearly of great importance. It was also a regular feature in ancient Near Eastern religions that the god had to engage in strenuous conflict before he could ascend the throne. Marduk had to defeat Tiamat before he could attain supremacy among the gods. It was necessary for Baal not only to drive out the "substitute king" Attar but also to engage in violent conflict with his bitterest opponent, Mot, who would not yield without a fight.

The association of the conflict motif with enthronement was a familiar feature. There are clear traces of it in the Old Testament (e.g., Pss. 2 and 110). The enemies had to be struck down and made into a "footstool" for the victorious lord (Ps. 110:1).

Baal's conflict with Mot was short but fierce. The two adversaries fell upon each other like wild bulls. But the sun goddess was able to kill Mot in advance so that his struggle was bound to end in defeat (49:VI:24ff.). His time was over; and he was incapable of continuing the struggle any longer. Accordingly, Baal was now back where he had begun. Once again he was king on Sapan, the mountain of the gods in the north; and he took his seat on his throne (76:II:12-15). This was his permanent abode, where he

might be found, his sanctuary ('nt:III:26ff.), where his praise was sung to the accompaniment of cymbals ('nt:I:17ff.). His subjects served and honored him ('nt:I:2ff.). He was a real kingly figure, who knew how to assume leadership when it was called for (137:21ff.). It was natural that this god should push El, the supreme god in the Ugaritic pantheon, into the background. Baal became the active, *de facto* king, whereas El retained nominal supremacy.

Baal was also king in the cult. He sat upon his throne at the New Year festival, after the appropriate events had been enacted in the cultic drama. He had returned from his sojourn in the underworld, and was greeted with the cultic shout, "Our king is Aliyan Baal; our judge, and none is above him!" (51:IV:43ff.) The fact that Baal was again established on his throne was a guarantee for the year ahead: rain and fertility were thereby assured.

Baal's worshippers saw in him the powerful king who drove across the sky on the clouds, and let his mighty voice be heard in the crash of the thunder. In violent conflicts he triumphed over his opponents. He sent the rain and promoted fertility; but the heat and drought of summer compelled him to withdraw and descend into the depths of the earth. When autumn came and the rains began, it was Baal who returned to ensure fertility and ascend the throne. His return and enthronement were celebrated at the autumnal New Year festival, when the rainy season began. The entire annual cycle was then presented in the cultic drama, the climax being Baal's enthronement and the dedication of his temple, which took place anew each year.

BAAL AND YAHWEH

The Baal with whom Yahweh was identified in the time of Saul and David certainly had the same leading characteristics as the Baal of the Ugaritic texts. It is also easy to recognize many of these features in the character of Yahweh as depicted in the Old Testament. Most of them are probably to be found in the Psalter, which

has preserved many ancient elements suppressed elsewhere. In Psalm 29, a magnificent hymn to Yahweh's voice, Yahweh is celebrated as God of the storm and the thunder. He has let his voice peal out across "the great waters" (vs. 3). "Above the flood waters Yahweh sat enthroned; Yahweh sat enthroned as King forever" (vs. 10). It is interesting to note in verse 1 that those who are invited to praise Yahweh are called *b^ené'êlîm*, "divine beings" (literally, "sons of gods"). The thought of a pantheon is not far away.

Psalm 104, an ancient hymn, is also full of mythological elements similar to those found in the *Ras Shamra* texts. Yahweh is described here in vivid terms as the creator and sustainer of the world. It is said that He established the earth upon its foundations (vs. 5), with the primeval sea, *t^ehôm*, around it (vs. 6). He makes the clouds his chariot and travels on the wings of the wind (vs. 3). He sends the rain and the streams, makes the grass and plants grow, ripens the corn and the grapes, and provides olive oil and bread (vss. 10-17). Here Yahweh has taken over the role of the god of fertility; and this was of the utmost moment if He was to take the place of Baal.

The practice of temple prostitution was also closely linked with the fertility god. It had its natural place in the cult at the great annual festival, when Baal's enthronement was celebrated and fertility was ensured for the year ahead. It was then that the "sacred marriage" took place and the worshippers gave themselves up to drunkenness and sexual orgies in the most licentious part of the festival.

This, too, began to creep into Israelite practice, but was met by violent opposition, especially from prophetic and priestly circles. We hear of this reaction as early as Amos (2:7), *c.* 760 B.C. It is particularly sharp and pronounced in Hosea and Jeremiah, who both make repeated attacks on the sexual aspects of the cult (Hos. 4:12-14, 5:3-5, 6:10, 7:4, 9:1; Jer. 2:20, 3:2-4, 6-13, 9:1, etc.). The prophets and the Yahwistic circles regarded temple prostitu-

tion, and the entire cultic system which was characterized by it, as absolutely incompatible with Yahwism. It was rebellion against Yahweh and against the moral standards for which He stood. But a violent struggle was necessary before these standards could be established. The leading circles, particularly in the Northern Kingdom were profoundly influenced by Canaanite life and Canaanite ways; and they appear to have protected the system of temple prostitution. At all events the sexual cult maintained itself tenaciously and had to be attacked repeatedly. Both sides were in deadly earnest; and neither was fastidious about the methods used. It was the downfall of the two kingdoms which gave the final victory to the Yahwistic party.

Zion with its temple and palace assumed Sapan's role as the mountain of the gods. This is evident from Psalm 48 with its praise of Zion. In verse 3 the identification is explicitly made: "the mountain of Zion is in the far north (*sāpôn*)."¹⁰ It is there that Yahweh lives and reigns (cf. Pss. 87 and 99). But there is ancient evidence that Yahweh was not always connected with Zion. In the Song of Deborah in the fifth chapter of Judges, it is said that Yahweh came from the region of Seir, the hill country in which Mount Sinai was probably situated (vs. 4). In the very ancient and difficult Psalm 68, the mountain of Bashan, which lies east of Jordan, is referred to as the "mountain of God" (vs. 15). Accordingly, it was not until after David's capture of Jerusalem that Zion came to be regarded as Yahweh's mountain.

It has also been established beyond all reasonable doubt that Yahweh was acknowledged as King and that His Enthronement Festival was celebrated as part of the great autumn and New Year Festival.¹⁰ The enthronement hymns, Psalms 47, 93, and 95 through 100, were characteristic elements in the ritual of the New Year

¹⁰ The fundamental work to establish this was done by Sigmund Mowinkel in *Psalmstudien II: Das Thronbesteigungsfest Jahwäs und der Ursprung der Eschatologie* (Christiania, 1922).

Festival. As elsewhere in the ancient Near East, the enthronement was associated with New Year's Day. The cultic shout, "*Yahweh mālāk*," (Yahweh has become king), occurs again and again in these psalms, which together provide evidence of the importance of the idea of Yahweh's kingship. This evidence can be supplemented from other passages in the Old Testament, particularly in I Samuel chapter 8, verse 7, where Saul's kingship is opposed to that of Yahweh.

Thus we see that the conception of Yahweh acquired new elements after Yahweh and Baal had been identified. These new elements enriched the conception, and some of them came to be so intimately associated with the character of Yahweh that we can no longer think of it apart from them. Nevertheless they were not able to dominate the conception of Yahweh, in which the characteristics of the God of the wilderness and of the tribal confederacy were more pronounced.

This may in part be linked with the fact that some of Baal's essential features were never incorporated in the conception of Yahweh, because the reaction against them from prophetic and priestly circles was too strong. It is a characteristic fact that Yahweh, unlike Baal, never had a divine consort. In Israel's religion, goddesses were always felt to be manifestly alien and abominable.

It is clear that Yahweh never became a god who died and rose again and whose status varied with the changing seasons. This significant characteristic in Baal, which marks him out clearly as a nature deity, was not transferred to Yahweh, presumably because it was felt to be alien to Yahweh's character. Yahweh's relationship to nature was quite different from that of Baal; and He could not be identified with nature in the way that Baal was. It was an essential element in Baal's nature that he died and came back to life again in accordance with the rhythm of the seasons. Thus the identification of Yahweh and Baal did not proceed without difficulty. It was the characteristics of Yahweh which were

dominant, whereas the name and the most distinctive features of Baal were eliminated because of priestly and prophetic opposition. The features which survived have been mentioned above.

What distinguishes Yahweh so sharply from Baal is His intimate association with history. He was not bound to the cycle of the season but guided his people through history towards a goal. The decisive event was not the victory over the primeval dragon but the victory over the Egyptians, when Yahweh led His people out of the "house of bondage," across the Red Sea, and into the promised land. For Israel that was the fundamental act of deliverance, recounted in narrative form and celebrated by the psalmists (Pss. 105, 106, 114). It had, for Israel, a special luster, because it was the means of linking Yahweh and His people firmly together. It must be added, however, that it never entirely suppressed other motifs, such as the creation of earth and sea, or the primeval conflict and triumph. It may be that the identification of Yahweh and Baal had some influence here.

In the long run Yahweh and Baal proved to be too different in character for the process of identification to be carried through successfully. Yahweh's was the dominating figure; but Baal remained a rival against whom, as the prophetic polemic shows, unceasing warfare had to be waged. The worship of Baal was constantly stimulated by new influences from other lands. It was disseminated throughout the Near East; and amongst those who gave it their active support were Israelite queens of foreign origin. (cf. I Kings 11, 14:21ff., 16:29ff., 18:19ff., 22:54; II Kings 10:18ff., 11:18, etc.). It exercised a strong popular appeal because of its preoccupation with fertility and its close connection with the crops and the changing seasons. Accordingly, it maintained its position tenaciously; and at times in which the strength of Yahwism was reduced (e.g., the exilic period), it made rapid advances.

It follows that the relationship between Yahweh and Baal was a matter of central importance; and if we do not take account of

this we get a distorted picture of the history of Israel's religion. Although in the end Yahweh triumphed over His opponent, we ought, nevertheless, not to underestimate Baal's importance. The conflict between Yahweh and Baal was more than an incidental historical episode. It was a conflict between principles and interpretations of life which in other forms is still being waged today.

EL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The other major deity in the Ugaritic pantheon who is of interest for our inquiry is El. He was, in name if not always in fact, the supreme god of Ugarit. But the role he played was somewhat less prominent; and his relationship to Yahweh was not so important as that of Baal, though greater than was once assumed.

The term "El," like "Baal," is used in the Old Testament in a number of ways. It is neither possible nor necessary to go into details here; but a few points may be noted.

From ancient times "El" was used in Canaan as a divine name. This is evident from the many personal and place names which begin or end with *'ēl*, e.g., Eldad, Elimelech, Eliezer, Samuel, Abdiel, Bethel, etc.

The term *'ēl* (plural, *'ēlīm*) was also used generally of any god (Exod. 15:11; Deut. 3:24; Judg. 9:46; Pss. 58:2, 82:1; Mic. 7:18, etc.). It could also designate God in distinction from men (Num. 23:19; Isa. 31:3, Hos. 11:9; Job 25:4, 32:13, etc.).

The many place names which include the element *'ēl* may indicate that El, like Baal, was a term applied to local deities. Jacob's struggle at Peniel (Gen. 32:25ff.) has been interpreted as a struggle with an *'ēl* of this type. The name of the place shows that *'ēl* was the form originally used here, although the Hebrew text has *'ēlōhīm* in verse 31. The being who struggled with Jacob had to depart when dawn broke; and this indicated that the narrative was originally about a local deity.

The alteration of an original *'ēl* to *'ēlōhīm* is, however, signifi-

cant. In a number of books in the Old Testament the term *'ēl* is used very rarely or not at all. This is true of the historical books, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, I and II Chronicles, and also of the books associated with Jeremiah and Hosea, the two prophets who were perhaps most hostile to the intrusion of Canaanite elements into Israelite religion. On the other hand there appears to be a preference for the term *'ēl* in the Psalms and Job. In the historical books, *'ēl* is usually replaced by *'ēlōhīm*, which the writers prefer to use in referring to Yahweh. It appears, therefore, that the Yahwistic circles in which the historical books originated regarded *'ēl* as a term which they tried to avoid.

'ēl is often used in a way which shows that it is not simply a generic term but denotes "God" with a capital G, i.e., the one God or the supreme God. As might be expected, Yahweh is identified with this El (cf. Isa. 43:12, 44:9; Ps. 118:27; and further Num. 23:8, 24:8; II Sam. 23:5; Job. 5:8, etc.). The term is also often used with the definite article *hā-'ēl* (II Sam. 22:31; Ps. 57:3, 68:20ff.; Job 5:8, etc.). The point noted above in the discussion of Baal applies here too; every individual occurrence of the term must be examined to determine its meaning. Yahweh came to be identified with El just as he was with Baal. El did not have features as distinctive as those of Baal, and therefore this identification was more easily made. There were fewer possibilities of conflict between Yahweh and El, traditionally the supreme god in the Canaanite pantheon, than between Yahweh and Baal, the supreme representative of the fertility cult. El did not have the same dominating position in the cult as Baal and therefore it was not so natural to treat him as a rival to Yahweh. His place in mythology as the supreme god of heaven was such that he easily receded into the background, a fact which is manifest in the Ras Shamra texts.

The term *'ēl* is often used in the Old Testament in conjunction with various attributes, e.g., *'el gādōl*, "a great God" (Deut. 7:21; Pss. 77:14, 95:3), *'el kannā*, "a jealous God" (Exod. 20:5), *'ēl*

rahûm, "a compassionate God" (Exod. 34:6), etc. It is not only possible but probable that some of these compound expressions are genuine names, e.g., *'el šadday* (Gen. 17:1; Num. 24:6, 16; Job 8:3, etc.). This is quite clearly true of *'el 'elyôn*, which is used in Genesis chapter 14, verse 18, as the name of the supreme deity of Jerusalem at a time when the city was still in the possession of the Canaanites (Jebusites). In verse 22, Abraham identifies Yahweh with El Elyon, since he invokes the name of "Yahweh El Elyon." This identification, however, does not appear in either the Greek (LXX) or Syriac (Peshitta) translations of the Old Testament, in which the name Yahweh is not represented, so that Abraham invokes only El Elyon. The term El Elyon is used of Yahweh in Numbers chapter 24, verse 16, and Psalms 73, verse 11 and 107, verse 11; and accordingly there can be no doubt that the identification was actually made.

The basis of the identification may have been that El (Elyon) occupied an important place as the supreme figure in the Canaanite pantheon. By being identified with this god, Yahweh appropriated his position as paramount, which he subsequently retained when the term "El" receded into the background while "Elohim" tended to take its place, alongside the name Yahweh.

EL IN THE RAS SHAMRA TEXTS

In the Ras Shamra texts "El," in the form *'il*, is used both as a general term for any deity and also for the supreme god in the Ugaritic pantheon. The word is also used in the plural, *'ilm*, to denote a number of gods. Occasionally another plural form, *'ilhm*, occurs; and the expression *bn. 'il* (sons of god) can also be used to denote more than one god. Since the Ugaritic gods can be so described, it is clear that the term *'il* was used in the most comprehensive way.

In most of its occurrences, however, *'il* refers to the supreme

god. El was supreme in the assembly of the gods; and envoys from other quarters had to resort to him (137:10ff.). Like Baal, he is described as king (129:5ff.). He possessed supreme authority on all matters relating to the gods. It was to him that Prince Sea applied when he wanted Baal to be handed over (137), and his permission had to be obtained before Baal could build his temple. The detailed accounts of negotiations with El occupy a considerable amount of space in the texts. He did not grant an equally ready hearing to all. He appears to have been prepared to grant the request of Prince Sea; but Anat failed to gain from him definite permission for Baal to build his temple. On the other hand he did grant permission when El's own wife, Ashera, interceded with her husband on Baal's behalf. It seems that El had a certain element of arbitrariness in his nature, and was not bound by any principles of action. Perhaps it was not very easy to hold a steady course, surrounded as he was by gods and goddesses who were at variance with each other. A contributory cause of El's deep involvement in the intrigues of the deities is that he appears to have been no longer in a position to intervene forcibly in what was happening. He had receded into the background, although nominally he still wielded supreme power.

El is often called *Tor-il*, "the Bull El" which shows that, like Baal, he too was a fertility god. He was looked upon as a guarantor of the fertility of livestock, and in all probability was represented as a bull as well as in human form. When King Jeroboam I of northern Israel had bull images of gold made and set them up in Dan and Bethel (I Kings 12:26ff.), he was acting in accordance with well-established Canaanite traditions about both Baal and El. His words: "Here is your God, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt" are easily understood if set against the Canaanite background in which the supreme deity was represented in the form of a bull. Nevertheless the identification encountered

stout opposition. Even if the process of equating Yahweh with El went on, generally with little hindrance, the attempt to represent Yahweh in the form of a bull was rejected.

There is clear evidence of this in chapter 32 of Exodus, the story of Aaron's golden calf, which Moses destroyed. The words used of the golden calf are the same as those used by Jeroboam. Accordingly, the reference is not to foreign gods but to Yahweh in the form of a bull. This is described as "a great sin" (vss. 30ff.) which will be severely punished. At this point, too, the difference between Yahwistic and Canaanite religion is clear.

The role which El played in the Ugaritic cult is not clear. The archaeological data provide a good deal of information about the cult of Baal, Dagan, and the female deities, but little about that of El. Impressive temples of Baal and Dagan have been unearthed, but none belonging to El. The two temples stood on the crest of a mound; but in the neighborhood of the sites there is no trace of a corresponding temple to El. On the other hand his name heads the list of offerings which have been found; and the offerings which are prescribed for him are substantial (1:1ff., 9:1ff., and probably 3:1ff.). There can, therefore, be little doubt that El must have had a prominent place in the Ugaritic cult. Rich offerings were made to him; and, as we can see from the texts, he also played a part in the cultic drama. But it is not absolutely certain what that part was.

In general Baal and Anat were the leading figures; but El also took the lead on occasion and determined the action of the cult. This is particularly evident during Baal's sojourn in the underworld. It was El who by his own example took the lead in the rites of mourning; and it was he who arranged for a substitute king to occupy the throne during Baal's absence. But as soon as Baal returned the situation was completely changed. El withdrew from the scene. There is no question that his standing in the Ugaritic pantheon was an important one and that formerly he had been

supreme.¹¹ But the plain sense of the texts cannot be explained away. Baal was in process of winning the supremacy. This was inevitable, since El became increasingly a passive figure in the background, whereas Baal was the champion who sallied forth to engage in conflict when danger threatened.

The young god of fertility took the old god's place. This feature is not peculiar to Ugarit. It occurred over and over again in ancient Near Eastern religion. A characteristic example took place in the Hurrian pantheon. Alalu was ousted by Anu, who secured for himself the throne of the gods, but was struck down by the mighty Kumarbi, who, in turn, had to give way before the storm god, Te:rub.¹² It is not easy to discover the reasons for these changes. They may have been brought about by the influence of new ethnic or cultural groups;¹³ but we cannot be sure. All we know is that the change did take place; and it appears that the position of supremacy in the pantheon changed hands at Ugarit also. As Marvin H. Pope puts it:

In the Amarna and Ramessid period, the storm gods, the Hurrian Teshub and the Semitic Hadad-Baal, are the major deities—their identification with one another and with the Egyptian Seth in the Ramessid period is patent—while Kumarbi and El have passed out of the picture.¹⁴

In an inscription from Kara Tepe in Cilicia, written in Phoenician in the eighth century B.C., in the time of King Azitawadda, Baal plays the leading role, and is named before El, who is barely men-

¹¹ O. Eissfeldt holds that El was still the supreme god during the period from which the texts come: see his *El im ugaritischen Pantheon* (Berlin, 1951), 53ff. But I do not think that texts no. 2 and 53 (Gordon) provide adequate evidence to support his view (pp. 60ff.).

¹² Cf. H. Güterbock, "The Hittite Version of the Hurrian Kumbari Myths," *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. LII (1948), 124-25. Further, Kapelrud *Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts*, 88ff., and Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, 103-104.

¹³ Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, 103.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

tioned: Baal of the Heavens, and El Creator of Earth.¹⁵ The order of the names here, and the fact that Baal is frequently referred to elsewhere in the texts, make it plain that Baal occupies the leading position. The conflict which is reflected in the Ugaritic texts is now over. As it has been said, "Gods die slowly in the Ancient World, even after senility has shown its symptoms. In the course of three hundred years, there were no violent changes, only gradual trends."¹⁶

The development in Canaan was probably along the same lines. We have already seen that Baal occupied a strong position; but he had not yet ousted El, who appears to have retained the leading position, particularly at Jerusalem. The situation at the time when David captured the city (c. 1000 B.C.) is in many ways obscure; but it seems that a number of deities (Shelem, Sedek, and El Elyon) had been fused, so that a further fusion with Yahweh presented no serious difficulties. Nevertheless Yahweh's distinctive characteristics appear to have predominated within a relatively short time, so that in all probability the features which survived from Jerusalem's former supreme god were of no great significance. One who was stronger than the old gods had displaced them and assumed the leading position, and, in due course, the sole position.

Nevertheless the character of Yahweh was influenced by the fusion with Baal. New features were taken over and retained. The most warlike traits disappeared and were replaced by gentler characteristics. Yahweh's relationship to the crops and vegetable growth, to life and reproduction was influenced by El, who thus did not vanish from the scene without leaving traces behind him. Yahweh was no longer thought of in exactly the same terms as before.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Cyrus H. Gordon, *Introduction to Old Testament Times* (Ventnor, N. J., 1953), 198-201.

¹⁶ Hillel A. Fine, *Studies in Middle-Assyrian Chronology and Religion* (New York, 1955), 116.

OTHER GODS

Reference has been made above to Baal's opponent, Prince Sea, who is probably to be identified with Lotan "the twisting serpent" and Tannin the sea monster, the Old Testament parallels being Leviathan, Tannin, Tehom, and Rahab. Such mythical figures played a part in early Israelite belief; and of this there is evidence, particularly in the Psalms, though references to them have not survived in the historical texts.

There are also in the Old Testament traces of other divine beings who appear in the Ras Shamra texts. In the historical books Israel is often criticized for forgetting Yahweh after she had adopted a settled existence in Canaan among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Jebusites, and other peoples (e.g., Judg. 3:5ff.). They forsook Yahweh and worshipped the gods of the Canaanites, who are called Baals and Astartes (Judg. 2:13, 10:6, I Sam. 7:3f., 12:10) or Baals and Asheras (Judg. 3:7; II Chron. 33:3). Apostasy to these deities appears to have taken place on a considerable scale, so that the threat to Yahwism was a serious one. This was not only a feature of the period of the Judges. It persisted during the monarchy, when the cult of Baal and Astarte enjoyed the patronage of the foreign consorts of Israelite kings. The eighteenth chapter of I Kings describes a violent conflict between the prophets of Baal and of Ashera on the one hand and Elijah, the prophet of Yahweh on the other. But the prophets of Ashera (vs. 19) do not seem to have played an important part on that occasion; and it is possible that the reference to them is a later addition to the narrative, made in order to produce the familiar association of Baal and Ashera.

The predilection of queens for the goddess Ashera first becomes evident shortly after the description of the kingdom in 930 B.C. (though this of course, does not rule out the possibility that Ashera may also have been worshipped by some of the wives of David

and Solomon). We are told that Queen Maacah worshipped Ashera (I Kings 15:13) and that Ahab's notorious consort, Jezebel, worshipped both Baal and Ashera (Kings 16:31ff.). In the reign of Manasseh, king of Judah, altars were built for Baal and Ashera-images were erected (II Kings 21:3, 7). At various times reforming measures were directed against such objects and practices. King Asa suppressed Maacah's Ashera worship (I Kings 15:13). King Hezekiah initiated a reform (II Kings 18:4); and we are told that King Josiah ordered all the temple utensils belonging to Baal, Ashera, and the whole host of heaven to be burned up (II Kings 23:4).

The references to Astarte as a goddess worshipped at Sidon (I Kings 11:5, 33; II Kings 23:13) and as a goddess of the Philistines (I Sam. 31:10) indicate that she was a popular deity among Israel's neighbors.

We may also note that the term *ʾāšērā* is often used in the Old Testament of a cultic object which evidently stood in close connection with the altar. It appears to have been a pillar, possibly an idol (Exod. 34:13; Deut. 7:5, 12:3, 16:21; Judg. 6:26, etc.); and although its precise nature cannot be determined, at all events it is clear that it was a cultic object associated with the cult of Ashera. Thus the references to it provide further evidence that that cult was widespread in Israel.

We have assumed that Astarte and Ashera are one and the same goddess. This is a view which has not always been accepted; but the evidence of the *Ras Shamra* texts seems to confirm it. It is not easy to decide whether two originally distinct goddesses have been fused. Like the male deities, the goddesses sometimes altered their characters or were fused or identified with each other; and this happened to such an extent that it is not always possible to make sharp distinctions between them.¹⁷

¹⁷ William Foxwell Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore, 1942), 71.

A comparison between the Old Testament and the Ras Shamra texts provides evidence for one of these changes. We have seen that in the Ras Shamra texts Ashera was the wife of El and Anat the wife of Baal. The two goddesses were pitted against each other in the struggle for power. When Baal descended under the earth, Anat exclaimed bitterly, "Let Ashera rejoice." But we have also noted that it was Ashera who obtained from El permission for Baal to build his temple. Here it is she who is on Baal's side. Does this mean that Baal was in process of taking over the wife of the supreme god? The evidence does not enable us to give a definite answer to this question; but we have noted above that in the Old Testament Baal and Ashera (Astarte) are commonly mentioned together. There, at all events, Ashera has taken her place as Baal's wife and Anat does not appear at all. The only traces of her that we find are the masculine personal name Anath (Judg. 3:31, 5:6) and the place called Anathoth (Jos. 21:18; I Kings 2:26; Isa. 10:30; Jer. 1:1, etc.). It is quite possible that this latter name is in some way connected with the goddess; but we have no precise information on the subject.

In the Ras Shamra texts, on the other hand, Anat is the most prominent of the goddesses, not in the sense that she occupies a higher position than Ashera, but because of her indefatigable energy and pugnacity. Clearly she is a goddess of war, love, and fertility. She is mentioned in the texts about ninety times, usually as "virgin Anat," *btlt 'nt*, but nearly as often simply as "Anat."

Ashera, the wife of the supreme god El, appears in the texts about sixty times, in about thirty of which she is referred to simply as "Ashera," *'ašrt*, and in about twenty by a fuller title which may be rendered "the Lady Ashera from the sea," *rbt. 'ašrt. ym*. The name Astarte, *'ttrt*, occurs only six times. Here the Ras Shamra texts are in general agreement with the Old Testament, where the term "Ashera" occurs more frequently than "Astarte." Nevertheless it is by this latter name that the goddess has come to be

best known in Western usage. The references in the Old Testament show that Ashera was the more commonly used name in Canaan. They also indicate that Ashera succeeded in maintaining her position. She did not give place to Anat in the way in which El had to give place to Baal. Thus the development indicated was different from that which took place among the male deities. There was no radical change; but the goddess who had from ancient times been women's special deity retained her position. It may have been that Ashera was preferred because Anat's pugnacity was rather frightening.

There is no mention in the Old Testament of Mot, the opponent and antithesis of Baal. If he had appeared there, he would have been absorbed by the deity whom the Old Testament calls *Māwet* or *Môṭ*, i.e., Death. It may be that originally this *Māwet* and the Mot of the *Ras Shamra* texts were identical, but that differences of emphasis emerged in the course of development. In the Old Testament *Māwet* or *Môṭ* means "death"; but there a connection with the *Ras Shamra* evidence may lie in the fact that the word can denote the realm of the dead, the underworld (Isa. 28:15; Hos. 13:14; Pss. 6:6, 9:14, 22:16; Job 28:22, 30:23, 38:17, etc.), with which Mot is closely connected in the *Ras Shamra* texts. Occasionally Death is personified in the Old Testament (Jer. 9:20; Ps. 49:15; Job 18:13; Lam. 1:20); but the few glimpses that we get of this figure do not give us much to build upon, and the element of personification does not amount to much.

It is not remarkable that the figure of Mot does not really appear in the Old Testament. As we have seen, there is a strong tendency there to get rid of mythological conceptions. The traces that survive appear for the most part in poetical passages and in the prophets. In particular much old material has been preserved in the Psalms, but even they provide no evidence that Mot was of any significance in Israel.

V.

THE CULT: FESTIVALS, SACRIFICES, RITES, PSALMS

THE RAS SHAMRA TEXTS have been interpreted above as predominantly cultic in character; but this need not be taken to imply that the form in which we now have them is precisely that which was used in cultic situations. Presumably they have been polished and modified; and no doubt additions have been made to them in the process of transmission. But it is reasonable to assume that they present the myths in substantially the form in which they were used in the Ugaritic cult, and that they have undergone only minor changes.

We have seen that the young fertility god Baal occupies an important place in the texts; and this fact has been taken to indicate that he was the central figure in the cult. In the sacrificial lists (Gordon, nos. 1 and 9) Baal is mentioned together with the other gods; but his large temple with its dominating position shows that his position in the Ugaritic pantheon was one of special importance. This temple was the center of the Baal cult; and it was there that the events involving Baal which are narrated in the texts were enacted.

The supreme cultic occasion was the great festival which lasted for several days and which was celebrated just as the autumnal rains were beginning. The drought of summer was at an end; and a new year could begin. The autumnal New Year festival was an important occasion not only at Ugarit but in most Near Eastern countries: the ancient Sumerian *zagsmug* festival and the *akitu* festival in Assyria and Babylonia were of the same type. The char-

acter of this festival as it was celebrated at Ugarit (and correspondingly in Canaan) is clearly indicated by what we are told about Baal. It was, in fact, the drama of Baal which was enacted in the autumnal New Year festival. The texts about Baal were the liturgy of the festival. Baal's conflicts with Prince Sea and with Mot, his descent under the earth and his triumphant return, the building of the temple, the festival of its dedication, and the sacred marriage all took place in the cult in a realistic and vivid presentation which lasted throughout the days when the autumnal New Year Festival was celebrated. The worshippers were active participants in the cult, weeping and lamenting when Baal descended under the earth and joining wholeheartedly in the joyful celebrations when he returned triumphantly after defeating his enemies. The climax came with his enthronement and the great sacrificial feast, at which there was boisterous junketing and the wine flowed free, the whole ending in unrestrained debauchery when the god's marriage was celebrated.

But the purpose of the celebration was not simply to give the worshippers a good time. The point was that the year which lay ahead was in this way lived through and experienced in sacramental anticipation. It was not simply a dramatic presentation but a creative means by which the course of the year was determined, the aim being to ensure Baal's victory and with it fertility and rich crops in fields and pastures. In accordance with a conception which seems to us to be magical in character, this was what was done in the cult. What took place was a kind of "imitative magic." In the cult Baal triumphed over his enemies and by his enthronement, and the erection of his temple ensured rain and fertility for the coming year. Thereby creative forces were set in motion, and what we today call nature was stimulated to action. In this context the obvious embodiment of "nature" may be taken to be Baal, whose victory and enthronement in the cult guaranteed a prosperous year with abundant rain and a rich harvest.

Israel had its own autumnal New Year Festival sometimes called the Feast of the Tabernacles, the Feast of Ingathering, the Feast of Yahweh, or simply, "the Feast" (Exod. 23:16, 34:22). It was celebrated in the autumn when the harvest had been gathered in. In Judah in the later period it was celebrated for eight days at the time of the full moon in the month of Tishri; but in the earlier period it was probably celebrated in the month of Ethanim (i.e., October/November) when the rainy season was just beginning.¹

The Old Testament does not contain very much evidence bearing on this festival; and some scholars have surmised that the Old Testament shows us only what survived of an earlier and more important festival with a far richer content. In 1912 the German scholar Paul Volz drew attention to the connection between the New Year Festival and the Feast of Tabernacles.² The definitive contribution to the subject was made in 1922 by Sigmund Mowinckel who had carried out his investigations independent of Volz and who published his conclusions in volume II of his *Psalmestudien: Das Thronbesteigungsfest Jahwäs und der Ursprung der Eschatologie*. He took as his starting point a number of Psalms to which he applied the term "Enthronement Psalms." These were, in the first instance, 47, 93, and 95 through 99, with which the following may also be associated 8, 15, 24, 29, 33, 46, 48, 50, 66, 75, 76, 81, 82, 84, 114, 118, 132, 149; Exodus 15:1-18. A further group of Psalms which are relevant to the subject are 65, 67, 85, and 120 through 124. All of these display elements derived from the circle of ideas associated with "the day of Yahweh," the day on which Yahweh's enthronement was celebrated (cf. Neh. 8:10; Hos. 2, 7:5, 9:5; Amos 5:17ff.).

"It was in the rites and psalms which belonged to Yahweh's Enthronement Festival that this idea of enthronement was reflected,

¹ Sigmund Mowinckel, *Offersang og sangoffer* (1929); E. T., *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*.

² *Das Neujahrsfest Jahves (Laubhüttenfest)* (Tübingen, 1912).

or, more correctly, expressed and experienced. Clearly an important element was the great festal procession, the triumphal entrance of Yahweh for his enthronement, to which reference is made in Psalm 47, verse 6. It evidently had a strongly dramatic character and was accompanied by dancing and singing. In all probability Yahweh's personal manifestation and presence in the festal procession was symbolized by His holy Ark. It may be presumed that Psalms 24 and 132 were both associated with this procession."³

The heart of the autumnal New Year Festival is the coming of Yahweh as king after his victory over all hostile powers. Now he will govern as a gracious and righteous king. His coming means a new creation, the beginning of a new year, the return of the rains, renewed fertility and prosperity.

Festival and cult are closely connected. In the festal cult men experience the deity. In it what happened in the past is performed again in the present; reality is created anew. Accordingly all cult has its myth; and we find that various complexes of myths underlie the Enthronement festival, which was part of the New Year Festival.⁴ These complexes show an unmistakable connection with ancient Canaanite religion, and also other features which probably have their origin in Babylonian religion, in particular the important myth of creation and of the conflict with the chaos monster. The traces of this latter theme, which are to be found in the Old Testament, seem to carry the stamp of Babylonian influence. Yahweh is king because He has triumphed over the chaos monster (Tiamat in Babylonia, Tehom in the Old Testament) and created the world (Pss. 96:10, 95:3ff., 24:1ff., 33:6-9, 93, 29:3-10). In the course of time the ancient, mythical features receded into the background; but it is evident that at an earlier stage their importance was considerable, as the Psalms clearly show.

³ Mowinckel, *Offersang og sangoffer*, 128; E. T., *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*.

⁴ On this and what follows, see Mowinckel, *Psalmestudier II*, 45ff.

Closely connected with the myth of creation and of the conflict with the chaos monster is the myth of the conflict with the gods. The monsters in the myth of chaos have been transformed into hostile gods who are defeated (Pss. 96:4, 97:7). But, as we have seen above, in Israel other themes were given prominence. The emphasis was laid on Yahweh's mighty acts in history; and the myth was expressed in historical terms. We find that the story of the Exodus from Egypt is put alongside the myth of creation and of the conflict with the gods. It performs the same function as the myth: it serves to display Yahweh's mighty deeds in the past. The Exodus from Egypt is equated with the creation, and the overthrow of Pharaoh with the overthrow of the chaos monster (Exod. 15; Pss. 66A, 81, 95, and 114).

The myth of the conflict with the nations is another modification of the myth of the conflict with the gods. It is a new and apparently historicized form of an ancient conflict motif. Yahweh has triumphed over all the kings of the earth and delivered Jerusalem from distress and affliction (Pss. 33:10ff.; 46, 48, and 76). The downfall of those enemies was represented as a just punishment; and from this there was developed a myth of judgment, in which the day of Yahweh brought judgment upon Israel's enemies (Pss. 75, 82, and 149). That day was a day of terror, on which Yahweh came in all His might. Although for Israel it meant deliverance, the people must quail before what then took place. On the day of the enthronement there was a remarkable blend of fear and joy (cf. Neh. 8:9ff.).⁵ But the dominant note was one of joy and thanksgiving (Pss. 66, 67, 96, and 125).

Thus the festival came to acquire a different character from what it had in Canaan and Ugarit.⁶ But its basis seems to have been sub-

⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁶ Albright holds that some of the most important of the Ugaritic texts are derived from south Canaanite sources. If so, there is a direct connection between Ugarit and Canaan. See related article in the *Hebrew Union College Annual*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1 (1950-51), 3.

stantially the same. When the Israelites settled in the land, they adopted Canaanite practices and the Canaanite cult and related them to Yahweh. Their borrowing included the agricultural autumnal festival. At a later stage features from the Babylonian New Year Festival were added.

Since so little is said in the Old Testament about this important festival, the question may be raised why it receded into the background. There must have been several reasons. We have already noted the tendency in Israel to suppress mythological material. It is primarily in the Psalms, which could not easily be altered, that such material is preserved. On the other hand, the Priestly source in particular bears clear traces of the elimination of older ideas, as can be seen, for example, in the creative narrative in the first chapter of Genesis, where, however, the ancient term *t^ohôm*, the primeval deep, still survives (vs. 2). Further, the Priestly source has modified the law more than the cult.⁷

Presumably the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation to Babylon of leading sections of the nation struck a fatal blow at the Enthronement Festival. Both the Temple and the sacred Ark were no more: the cult and the festal procession were deprived of their central points. The autumnal festival disintegrated into the New Year Festival, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The adoption of the Babylonian calendar with a vernal New Year completed the process.⁸

Nevertheless, several features of the festival have survived in the Old Testament. The *Ras Shamra* texts have confirmed that many of the points to which Mowinckel drew attention really belong to the framework of the autumnal New Year Festival. He maintained that in Numbers chapter 23, verse 21 (cf. Pss. 45:6, 89:16) "the shout of a king" is an allusion to the celebration of Yahweh's enthronement.⁹ This *t^ord^oat meleḵ* was the exultant

⁷ Mowinckel, *Psalmstudien* II, 35.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 206ff.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

acclamation of a king, expressing both joy at his enthronement and the hope of better days. Something exactly corresponding to this is found in ancient Ugarit when gods and men rejoice exultantly over Baal's return and enthronement.

Baal's role as god of rain, storm, and tempest was taken over by Yahweh (cf. e.g., Pss. 18, 29, 65, 106, and 126). In this context Yahweh is regarded as the giver of fertility. This is also His function in the ceremony of water libation which probably also formed part of the ritual of the festival. That ceremony is an unmistakable fertility rite. It is mentioned in the tractate *Sukkah* in the Mishnah; and there are traces of it in Isaiah chapter 12, verse 3, and in I Kings chapter 18, verses 41 through 46. The appropriateness of this ceremony to the kind of context which has been indicated above is confirmed by a comparison with what is related about the goddess Anat in one of the Ras Shamra texts: "She gathers water and washes, with the dew of heaven, the fat of earth, rain from him who mounts the clouds. The dew of heaven is her offering, the rain of her ablution is the stars" ('nt:II:38-41).

In Psalm 48, which Mowinckel includes among the enthronement psalms, Zion is called the farthest north (*sāpôn*) and the city of the great king. Yahweh dwells in its fortress. In the Ugaritic texts similar statements are made about Baal. His temple was erected on Sapan, the mountain in the north; and there he was acclaimed as king. The thought of the god's royal throne on the mountain in the north is clearly connected in the Ras Shamra texts with the theme of enthronement, which supports the view that Psalm 48 is an enthronement psalm.

The following assertion is made about Baal several times in connection with the building of his temple: "Our king is Aliyan Baal, our judge; and none is above him" (e.g., 5:IV:43ff.). Baal is represented as king and judge; and it is evident that the conception of him as judge is prominent, although it is not developed in detail. (In the ancient East the functions of a judge were different from

and more extensive than in the modern West. A judge had power and authority to carry out his decisions, to play an active and leading part in the maintenance of justice, and to influence the entire conception of justice.) In Israel, where this conception played a more important part, it was more fully developed (cf., e.g., Pss. 75, 82, and 149). These psalms suggest that Yahweh's conflict and victory were the basis of His role in Israel as Judge and His appearance as Judge on the day of His enthronement.

The triumph over the primal deep, over the chaos monster Leviathan, was one of the forms (in the earliest period certainly the most important) in which Yahweh's victory was represented. In the *Ras Shamra* texts it was Baal who had slain Leviathan, there called Lotan. Mot says to Baal, "Because you smote Lotan, the twisting serpent, destroyed the crooked serpent, the mighty (?) with seven heads . . ." (67:I:1-3) This is clearly a formula which was applied to the monster struck down by the victorious god. It was also known and used in Israel, for it occurs in almost the same form in Isaiah chapter 27, verse 1. In the latter passage it is, indeed, divorced from its ancient context; but its use in the *Ras Shamra* texts shows the pattern of ideas of which it originally formed a part.

As we have seen, the intimate association with the fertility cult led at an early stage to modifications in the content of the Enthronement Festival in Israel. The prophets, from Elijah and Elisha to the later prophets of reform, fought bitterly against Canaanite and other alien imports into the religion of Yahweh, and, in particular, against those which were connected with the fertility cult. We have noted that the Enthronement Festival receded into the background in the post-exilic period; but Deutero-Isaiah was familiar with its leading themes; and many of its features have been preserved in the Psalms and the Mishnah. It survived in the Feast of Tabernacles, and New Year's Day (*rôš haššānâh*) continued in the Jewish community to be the day associated with Yahweh's kingship. There

are no grounds for the supposing that it was otherwise in ancient Israel.

In the vocabulary associated with the many forms of sacrifice and offering there are many points of contact between Israel and ancient Ugarit.¹⁰ This is not surprising; for it may be assumed that the Israelites borrowed much of their cult from the Canaanites, and accordingly also borrowed the appropriate terminology. Indeed, very many of the terms in question are common not only to the Old Testament and the Ras Shamra texts but also all or most of the Semitic languages, e.g., *dbḥ* (Hebrew *zāḇaḥ*), *mtn* (Hebrew *mattān*), *ndr* (Hebrew *nēder*). They constitute a fairly extensive terminology; but they belong to the solid block of Semitic words which are common to most of the languages in that linguistic group. It follows that they do not justify us in drawing any special conclusions about the relationship between Israel and Ugarit.

Other words which denote special types of sacrifice give us perhaps something more to build upon. We hear in the Old Testament of *šēlāmîm*, i.e., "peace offerings" or "communion offerings" (Exod. 20:24, 24:5; I Sam. 11:15; Amos 5:22, etc.). The same term *šlm(m)* occurs in the sacrificial lists preserved at Ras Shamra (1:8, 3:17, 52, 5:7, 9:7; Krt: 130, 275). In a few instances the meaning may be open to doubt; but elsewhere the term is used of a specific type of sacrifice, concerning which, however, we unfortunately have no further information.

The drink offering, *neseḥ*, of which we hear in stories about Jacob (Gen. 35:14) and David (II Sam. 23:16), is also mentioned in the Ras Shamra texts (see, e.g., 'nt:IV:53-55). At Ugarit, however, it was evidently a libation which was poured into the earth, and thus had a somewhat different character from the drink offering in Israel.¹¹

¹⁰ On this and what follows, see Gray, "Cultic Affinities between Israel and Ras Shamra," *Z.A.W.*, Vol. LXII (1949-50), 209ff.

¹¹ Cf. Schaeffer, *The Cuneiform Texts of Ras Shamra-Ugarit*, 46-56.

Minhâh, the gift offering or food offering is often mentioned in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen. 4:3; Judg. 6:18; I Sam. 2:17, 29; 3:14). The term seems to be fairly comprehensive, which makes it antecedently improbable that much can be deduced from it. It occurs in the *Ras Shamra* texts, probably denoting a type of offering, *mnh* (120:1, 4); but it is impossible to draw any conclusions about it.

Some scholars have claimed that there are still further correspondences in terminology; but many of these are so uncertain that they may be disregarded.

What has been said above about the fertility god Baal and the Enthronement Festival gives some impression of the rich and vital cultic practice of ancient Ugarit. The description of the offerings brought by Anat when she had buried Baal indicates the abundance of the offerings, which is also suggested by extant sacrificial lists (see texts nos. 1, 3, 9).

The king played an important part in the cultic action. In the *Krt* text there is an account of an offering which the king brought (*Krt*: 62ff., 156ff.). He is said to have washed himself and made himself red. Presumably this was a ceremony of purification in which the king washed away his sin and ritual impurity with the blood of the sacrificial animal and thus consecrated himself for the sacred acts which he was about to perform. It is emphasized that he washed his arms right up to the shoulders before going into "the shade of the tent." He took with him a lamb and a bird for sacrifice, poured wine into a silver cup, and mounted to the top of the tower. It is natural to equate this tower with the tower of the temple, which corresponds to the pyramid-shaped tower commonly found in Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian sanctuaries. At the top of the tower there was an open terrace, surrounded by a parapet, where the sacrifices were offered. It is said of King Keret that he lifted his eyes to heaven and "sacrificed to his father, the bull El, and presented his sacrifices to Baal as food for Dagan's son" (*Krt*: 168-71).

It appears that this mode of sacrifice, with the presentation of offerings to Baal on the flat roof of the temple, was maintained for centuries. It was also practiced in Jerusalem as late as c. 600 B.C. Among the objects which Josiah, king of Judah, removed, were the altars which some of his predecessors had had built on the roof of the temple (II Kings 23:12). The polemic against these altars in the Book of Jeremiah indicates the cult with which they were associated. Jeremiah says in one of his predictions of doom on Jerusalem: "The Chaldeans who make war against this city will come and set fire to it and burn it with the houses on whose roofs incense was offered to Baal and drink offerings poured out to Baal to provoke me to anger" (Jer. 32:29; cf. also 19:13; Zeph. 1:5). The point could hardly have been put more plainly. At all events it cannot easily be denied that there appears to have been a line linking Ugarit and Jerusalem. But how many twists and turns there were in the line from fourteenth-century Ugarit to seventh-century Jerusalem is another question which the material available at present does not enable us to answer.¹²

It is certain that several of the rituals in ancient Ugarit had parallels in Israel; but, in default of more precise information than we possess, we must content ourselves with evidence which does not always provide a firm foundation on which to build. There can, for instance, be little doubt that a rite lies behind the account of Anat's treatment of Mot (49:II:30-36). She treated him like corn; and there can be no doubt that this was enacted dramatically. But what was the rite in question? Dussaud maintains that it was the one associated with the last sheaf at the end of the harvest. The aim was to deconsecrate the new crop and at the same time to renew "the spirit of the harvest" by the sacrifice of Mot.¹³ Dussaud cites the Old Testament parallel in Leviticus chapter 2, verse 14,

¹² In the article referred to on page 75, footnote 10, Gray does not discuss this question or mention the similarity.

¹³ Dussaud, *Les découvertes de Ras Shamra*, 2nd ed., 137ff.

where, however, the reference is to first fruits consisting of parched ears of corn and not of the last sheaf. Gray has pointed out that the parallels are much closer than Dussaud appears to have realized. The relevant passage in the Mishnah, the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo, and the historian Josephus all show knowledge of a rite which corresponds to the one which is presupposed in the text about Anat and Mot.¹⁴ It was observed on the tenth of Nisan at the beginning of the harvest. Both Josephus and the Mishnah mention threshing, roasting over a fire, and grinding the corn; after these ritual acts the crop was free for general use.¹⁵

Over and over again the Old Testament shows that the Israelites did not only borrow from Canaanite ways of worship but constantly relapsed into them. In the Northern Kingdom there were frequent insurrections and conflicts for power in which those who were more loyal to the religion of Yahweh and those who had yielded to Canaanite influence were often opposed to each other. Canaanite influence was particularly strong there. This is evident as early as the accession of Jeroboam after the division of the kingdom in 931 B.C. Jeroboam set up golden bull images at Bethel and Dan (I Kings 12:28ff.); and the very fact that he described the Festival with processions and sacrifices in front of the bull image. "land of Egypt" shows that he identified Yahweh with Baal-Hadad, whose symbol was the bull. He also celebrated a great New Year Festival with processions and sacrifices in front of the bull image. He established high places and appointed priests who were not of Levitical descent (vs. 31). All these measures show that Jeroboam tried to combine Yahweh worship with the ancient Canaanite cult, in order to gain the allegiance of the people and create a cultic center which would offset Jerusalem and its Temple of Yahweh.

In Judah the adherents of Yahweh were stronger; but there too

¹⁴ Mishnah, Menahoth 10; Philo, *De septenario*, II, 20; Josephus, *Antiquities*, III, 250.

¹⁵ See Gray, "Cultic Affinities between Israel and Ras Shamra," *Z.A.W.*, Vol. LXII (1949-50), 217.

Canaanite and other alien cultic practices were established, often with the support of the foreign queens. We read of various reforming movements which aimed at abolishing all foreign elements and creating a purer Yahwistic cult. On occasion such movements enjoyed the support of the kings; and they recurred throughout the entire history of Judah. Asa (912-872 B.C.), one of the earliest rulers of the Southern Kingdom, found it necessary to suppress abuses and remove the leaders of the foreign cult. But he was unable to control the cultic practices at the local high places which at that time were firmly established (I Kings 15:9-15). His reform was only temporary in its effect. The Canaanite cult survived for centuries after his time, as is shown (to mention only one of many corroborating data) by the fact that Josiah (640-609 B.C.), one of the last kings of Judah, undertook a far-reaching program of reform. He removed from the Temple of Yahweh all the objects which were associated with the worship of Baal and Ashera and expelled the priests who had been in charge of that cult. The high places were destroyed as far north as Samaria; and the altars at Bethel were removed (II Kings 23:4-20). But there was another relapse after Josiah's death; and there can be no doubt that the Canaanite cultic influence persisted throughout the entire history of the two Hebrew kingdoms. We cannot always be sure about the details; but what has been said above gives some indication of the course of events.

No psalms similar to those in the Old Testament have been discovered at Ras Shamra; but since practically all the Ugaritic texts are in poetical form it is possible to compare them with the Old Testament psalms.¹⁶ Parallelism is the basic structural feature of

¹⁶ Cf. Albright's remarks: "Unhappily we have only fragments of true lyrics and no real psalms, but even in our Ugaritic epics there are innumerable close reminiscences of the Hebrew book—My treatment of Psalm 68 below will illustrate the revolutionary character of the new material as applied to the interpretation of the Psalter. Fully half of the unique words which strew this Psalm may be illustrated from Ugaritic." See the *Hebrew Union College Annual*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1 (1950-51), 3.

Ugaritic as of other Semitic poetry. The same sense is repeated in different words twice, or occasionally thrice. Each line (i.e., each member in the parallelistic structure) usually has three stressed words; but there are varying forms; and in addition to the pattern 3+3 just mentioned, the following metrical structures are also found: 3+2, 2+2, 3+3+3, 3+2+2, etc. A single poetical passage may contain more than one of these metrical structures; and it is clear that such mixed meters were common in Ugaritic poetry. There are therefore good grounds for holding that they were also of frequent occurrence in Israelite poetry from early times.

Sometimes a refrain is used to emphasize what is said, occasionally with a modification in the final occurrence in order to increase the effect (cf. 49:II:16-22).¹⁷ A refrain may also be used to indicate the presence of a strophic structure (cf. 51:IV:52-57, VI:47-54), a device which is also found in the praise of the voice of Yahweh in Psalm 29.

Gordon, who has made a study of the forms of parallelism in the *Ras Shamra* texts,¹⁸ points out that practically all of them have their counterparts in the Old Testament. It must of course be admitted that these similarities for the most part belong to a common Semitic inheritance to be found throughout the poetry of the ancient Near East. Nevertheless it is probable that Israel received a large part (perhaps a very large part) of its share in this inheritance from Canaanite sources.

We have noted above a considerable number of ideas, motifs, words, and phrases which appear in both the *Ras Shamra* texts and the Old Testament. Usually these belong to the world of mythology, e.g., the conflict with the sea monster, the god's victory over his enemies, his enthronement, his installation as victor on the throne of Sapan, the erection of the temple on the sacred site, the

¹⁷ Cf. Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Handbook* (Rome, 1947), 105; Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Manual* (Rome, 1955), 111.

¹⁸ Gordon, *Ugaritic Handbook*, 102-13; Gordon, *Ugaritic Manual*, 108-20.

promotion of growth and fertility by rain and moisture. Since examples of all these have been cited above, it is unnecessary to repeat them here.¹⁹

It is instructive to examine individual psalms from the standpoint of their relationship to Ugaritic motifs, expressions, and details of cultic practice.²⁰ The psalms are firmly rooted in the Yahwistic faith and the Jerusalem cult; but this does not mean that they do not contain many elements derived from Canaanite religion. The recognition of these elements can help to shed fresh light on details in the religion of Israel. The same is of course true, to perhaps an even greater degree, of the prophetic books.²¹ It would be a mistake to disregard the rich material provided by the Ras Shamra texts; but I would repeat with emphasis what I have already observed more than once, that caution and discernment are needed in the use which is made of this material.

¹⁹ Cf. also J. H. Patton, *Canaanite Parallels in the Book of Psalms* (Baltimore, 1944).

²⁰ On this cf. the work by Albright cited on page 79 in footnote 16 and that by Patton cited in footnote 19 above.

²¹ See my book, *Joel Studies* (Uppsala, 1948), where the Book of Joel is examined from this point of view.

VI. LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY

WE HAVE ALREADY NOTED many points of similarity between the terminology of the Old Testament and that found in the Ras Shamra texts. There are words and expressions which are common to both and are used in the same sense in the two languages. A notable example is the description of Baal as *rkb 'rpt*, "he who mounts the clouds," to which there is a parallel in Psalm 68, verse 5. This is by no means the only point of contact with Ugaritic in this ancient psalm.¹ Several of them are of special interest; but only one or two can be noted here.²

In Krt: 126 and 138 the term *hrs* is used for "gold." A corresponding term is also used in Psalm 68, verse 14 (*hārūs*). But the usual word for "gold" in Hebrew is not this but *zāhāb*: *hārus* occurs in only a few passages (Prov. 3:14, 8:10, 19; 16:16; Zech. 9:3, in addition to the present passage), all of them poetical. Most of the points of resemblance between Hebrew and Ugaritic vocabulary are in poetic diction, as one would expect from the character of the texts. Practically all the Ras Shamra texts are poetical; and it is only natural that the parallels are to be found mostly in the poetical parts of the Old Testament. Further, in the Old Testament, which came into existence centuries after the Ras Shamra texts, it is the poetical parts which display the oldest linguistic

¹ See Albright's article in the *Hebrew Union College Annual*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1 (1950-51).

² See further Gordon, *Ugaritic Handbook*, 114ff., and Gordon, *Ugaritic Manual*, 121.

features; and therefore it is entirely natural that those parts should have the closest resemblance to the language of the Ras Shamra texts.

Gordon has drawn attention to a correspondence between the Ras Shamra texts and the Old Testament which *may* be merely incidental but which may well be of real importance. Psalm 68, which is a fairly long psalm containing some 36 verses and exhibiting a complicated text, does not have a single waw consecutive: the verbs are all used without it. The lack of this form is a characteristic of some other poetical passages in the Old Testament. Though it may be a feature of poetical style, this is not very likely, since the so-called waw consecutive seems to have occasioned no difficulty in most of the Old Testament psalms. It is more probable that Psalm 68 exemplifies earlier and more "original" verbal usage. If so, this is an indication that the Ras Shamra texts represent older forms than those commonly found in the Old Testament. So far as we can judge from the unvocalized texts, they contain no instances of that construction.

We ought not to draw far-reaching conclusions from the points of agreement between Ugaritic and Hebrew. For example these are the only two Semitic languages which have the two forms $an(u, i)$ and $an(a, o)$ $k(u, i)$ for the first person singular pronoun. As Gordon has pointed out,³ there are similar correspondences between Ugaritic and several of the Semitic, and even Hamitic, languages. The northwest Semitic change of final w to $y(i)$ appears in Ugaritic. This is one of the reasons for regarding it as a form of Canaanite, i.e., as a member of the northwest group of Semitic languages, a view which is still held by several leading scholars.⁴

On the other hand there are important features in Canaanite which do not appear in Ugaritic, e.g., the characteristic change of long a to long o . There are, therefore, some scholars who main-

³ Gordon, *Ugaritic Handbook*, 155ff.; Gordon, *Ugaritic Manual*, 121ff.

⁴ See, e.g., Robert de Langhe, *De Taal van Ras Shamra-Ugarit* (Nijmegen, 1948).

tain that the closest connections of Ugaritic are not with northwest Semitic but elsewhere, e.g., with Amorite. This was a language spoken by the Semitic people who for several centuries occupied the northern regions between the Tigris and the Euphrates. For a considerable period their chief center was Mari on the Euphrates, east of Ugarit. They were a powerful people, whose influence reached as far as the Mediterranean. At times they extended their territory along the rivers. During the first half of the second millennium B.C., they came to dominate both Assyria and Babylonia and former the ruling class in both these lands. Both King Hammurabi of Babylonia (who is renowned for his code of laws) and his elder contemporary Shamshi-Adad I of Assyria were of Amorite origin.

Goetze, one of the most industrious specialists on the Amorites and their history, maintains that the Amorite and Ugaritic languages are akin.⁵ At all events it is clear that the first somewhat hasty attempts to link Ugaritic closely to Hebrew must be rejected. It is, indeed, true that Ugaritic resembles Hebrew in many ways; but it seems likely that it resembles other languages still more closely. Taking into account our uncertain knowledge in this field, Gordon has reached the provisional conclusion that Ugaritic is an independent Western Semitic language which as yet we cannot attach with certainty to any specific linguistic group or family.⁶

⁵ A. Goetze, "Is Ugaritic a Canaanite Language?" *Language*, Vol. XVII (1947), 127-38.

⁶ Gordon, *Ugaritic Handbook*, 116; Gordon, *Ugaritic Manual*, 123.

CONCLUSION

THE RAS SHAMRA DISCOVERIES have given us new information about ancient Near Eastern religion. They reveal the beliefs, the conceptions, and the customs which were also prevalent in Canaan at the time when the Israelites were settled there. It follows that they are of immense importance to our understanding of Old Testament religion. By them a flood of light is shed on the entire background against which many religious ideas and cultic practices in the Old Testament must be seen. Many sharp contrasts are revealed between Canaanite and Yahwistic religion; but there are also many clear instances of close connection and direct influence. We have tried above to indicate in detail some of these relationships; and the evidence adduced should be sufficient to show that many features of Yahwistic religion cannot be fully understood unless we acquaint ourselves with what the Ras Shamra discoveries reveal about ancient Canaanite religion. There may be disagreement about details of interpretation; but that basic fact is no longer open to dispute.

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